











A DINNER OF HERBS



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DEDICATED

TO

A. F. P.

WHOSE SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING  
HAS NURTURED THIS BOOK





## A DINNER OF HERBS

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

PROVERBS XV.17

# A DINNER OF HERBS

## Chapter I

As Daphne turned her horse from the oiled highway, to the dirt road that marked the end of Bramton Cemetery and the beginning of Miller's woods, she glimpsed her mother's gaunt black figure stalking toward a marble mausoleum that gleamed pinkish white, and wholly chaste, in the bright July sunshine. Contempt wrinkled the girl's small nose. There was no room for mawkish sentiment in her grim philosophy, and she felt that nothing less could send a woman twice a week to the grave of her renegade husband.

L'Aiglon, undirected, took the first path into the woods and, in the sensuous pleasure of riding, Daphne forgot her adolescent bitterness. She hugged the rounded flanks with her knees and greedily inhaled the scent of hot horse-flesh mingled with the dust of dead leaves. Although she took this circuitous ride every day, its charm never lessened—the cool welcome, the rustling

music of the trees, and the path dappled with sunshine, as lacy as an old-fashioned valentine.

Sitting the saddle with the relaxed confidence of many years, she tilted her chin invitingly to the breeze, shaking her straight brown locks like a dancing wood-nymph.

There was none of Daphne's stoical philosophy reflected in her eager, animated face. Her hair was cut like a page boy's and the heavy bang reached almost to the clear gray eyes, where were registered all those emotions she hoped to subdue. They narrowed with disgust, rounded with surprise, or grew hazy with sympathy; but usually the corners were crinkled fan-wise, supplementing the ready smile that tugged perpetually at the generous mouth.

As her slim body adjusted itself rhythmically to the saddle, young muscles now taut, now slack,—her cheeks flushed, eyes bright, parted lips poinsettia red,—she was the spirit of youth, impatient to meet life, confident of success.

Near the village end of the woods, where a zigzagging brook crossed the path, L'Aiglon drew up before a crude bridge and Daphne dropped lightly to the ground.

"Refreshments are served, old dear. Help yourself to a tender salad."

A swagger little figure she made, in linen breeches, shepherd's-plaid jacket, and scarlet tie.



Striding over the crackling leaves, she slipped through a barricade of bushes into her secret nook, a childhood discovery.

It was a little open patch entirely surrounded by coppice. The brook, brilliant in the sunshine, flowed through the center, gurgling and splashing over the stones. Daphne crossed the tall grass and lay on her stomach, her mouth over a little cove in the bank, where the water was held in an earthen basin. She paused, Narcissus-like to study her reflection; but in the face that met hers the vitality, the animation, the pent-up spirit struggling for expression were all missing. She looked into a pair of widely spaced, fearless gray eyes: not so bad, she thought, but the nose was too short, the mouth too large. Her lips met those in the water. No, she was not pretty. Grace, her elder sister, had all the looks in the family. Oh well, a lawyer needed brains, not looks.

Enjoying the abandoned position, boots waving in the air, she noisily sucked up the cool water, inhaling the pleasant odor of wet earth. Later she would lie on her back and gaze into the tree-framed sky that was awesomely fascinating in its infinity.

Leaves rustled across the brook and she raised indolent eyes, expecting to greet a friendly robin. Instead she saw a pair of broad-toed oxfords, topped by tweed trouser-cuffs.

A masculine voice, so deep and rich it seemed to gather the silence into a tuneful sound, like the first strains of a cathedral organ, softly misquoted:

“Drink deep of the Pierian Spring,  
A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.”

Lying motionless, dripping lips poised above the water, Daphne listened to the voice as it faded into the rustling of the tree-tops, before curiosity overcame her amazement and she scrambled to her feet.

A tall, slim man in brown smiled gaily at her. He too, seemed possessed with the spirit of adventure, the eagerness of youth. A profusion of coppery hair and conspicuously blue eyes gave him a fairy-tale charm, but the girl resented his obvious attractiveness. She would show him that there was at least one female who was unimpressed by his comeliness. Tilting her chin impudently she asked:

“How about taking a drink yourself? Or do you know everything already?”

His burst of laughter was both flattering and musical.

“Please, may I cross the Pierian Spring and confess my ignorance?”

Daphne’s eyes sparkled: she hadn’t supposed

he would be at all clever. But she answered with utter indifference:

"If you like. I don't own it, I merely appropriate it."

Ignoring the stones, he leaped through the shallow water.

"Thanks for the invitation and for not being too darned conventional, Miss Churchill."

Surprise widened her eyes.

"How do you know my name?"

"I saw you riding through the village day before yesterday." As if that was explanation enough.

"Even so, I don't placard my name on my back."

"Couldn't we sit down?"

She agreed, and they faced each other in the tall grass. His rough tweed suit was out of press, the white shirt bloused carelessly over the belt, and the ends of the blue bow tie were uneven, but Daphne felt there was a certain distinction in his untidiness. After all, she decided, he was rather interesting.

"Having seen you," he went on, locking his slender fingers about his knee, "I made it my business to learn all I could about you. I discovered several things: for instance, you're a senior at Smith with legal ambitions, and you ride through the woods every day on a horse who owns the charming name of L'Aiglon. Yesterday I was sit-

ting on a stump when you cantered by, your chin in the air, looking for all the world like the emperor's little son."

"Village gossip's cheap." Her sophistication was borrowed from her elder sister, for Daphne's few followers were village boys, mostly younger than she, who played a fair game of tennis.

"I paid for my information," he answered, and digging into his pocket, produced a brier pipe with a square bowl. "Here's my proof."

"Exhibit A?" She peered curiously at the pipe. "Does it talk?"

He accorded her the laugh she desired.

"I heard your uncle worked in Dodge's Hardware Store, so I bought this as an excuse to obtain expert testimony. Isn't that the legal phraseology?"

"You were foolishly extravagant. In a village like this the natives are always eager to impart any sort of information, down to how often one brushes one's teeth." Her tone was still bored, but the heart beneath the black-and-white coat tripped gaily.

"It was worth the price. Your uncle's a man of real perception. Crazy about you, isn't he!"

"Uncle Robert's an old dear. He swallows me whole, like an oyster, for he knows, poor soul, if he bit into my philosophy he'd find it hard as a rock."

The blue eyes opened in mock amazement.

"A rock in an oyster?"

She broke into a loud, merry laugh. After all, need she assume Grace's superciliousness? She had never met a man half so interesting; why not enjoy him?

"Now suppose you loosen up a bit," she suggested, no longer disguising her interest. "Name, age, color, and condition of servitude." She'd show him she could play the game.

"All right." He checked off the questions on fingers white and slender. Daphne, noticing them, quietly sat on her brown hands. "Name: Jeremiah Veerland, but no one ever calls me that. It means Exalted-of-the-Lord. I'm called Jerry, probably because it rhymes with sherry. Want to cut corners and start in calling me Jerry?"

Her cheeks flushed in spite of herself. What a hit he'd make at her senior prom!

"Sure, I'll call you Jerry. Did you suppose I was so overshadowed by the ample queen that your request would shock me?"

"Mid-Victorian, you mean? I did not." He combed back his cinnamon-colored hair with his fingers. "You're the most keenly alive girl I've ever seen."

Daphne was ashamed of her heart, which fluttered like the leaves overhead. A man such as this Jerry-exalted-of-the-Lord didn't expect to be taken seriously.



"You haven't told me how you happen to be in Bramton."

"Let me finish the questionnaire first. Trade, printing salesman; age, twenty-eight; *raison d'être*, flu and a desire to vegetate. I just happened on Bramton as the first really country place, but after one night at the magnificent Bramton Hotel, I agreed with O. Henry that New York is the best summer resort in the world. However," his blue eyes were gazing at her with disquieting intensity, "I've changed my mind and I think I'll stay for a fortnight at least."

"If you've just gotten over the flu, you'd better return to your handsome hostelry and change your shoes." She pointed the crop at his water-soaked oxfords. Did he expect her to believe he was staying in Bramton for her? Applesauce.

He bent his toes, and shrugged as the bubbles oozed out.

"I'll embrace Christian Science for the moment. Let's talk about you, now. Did you know that people with widely separated eyes are very imaginative? Yours are unusually far apart."

Daphne measured the distance with thumb and forefinger, marking it off on the handle of her crop. "Then your theory's rotten, for I haven't any more imagination than a worm."

"A worm may have a lot; who knows? At any rate, your horse's name proves my contention.

Bet every time you ride him you imagine yourself the appealing little L'Aiglon!"

"Wrong again. I'm a rank realist. I chose the name because his legs are long—so!"

Jerry threw back his head and laughed with the abandon of a little boy; youthful, too, was the brilliant color that glowed through his transparent skin. But Daphne decided it was that rich, vibrant laugh that attracted her. To evoke it was like producing music on a rare instrument. Other girls might rave about his hair, his eyes, his complexion; for her it was only his melodious laugh that counted. Whereupon she felt more pleased with herself.

"If you hadn't possessed the rare gift of imagination, you'd never have picked out this exquisite spot, Daph-ne." He lingered on the first syllable, as if loath to part with it. "Let's call it Eden."

"The Garden of Eden, would you? Then look out, here comes the serpent." She wriggled her shabby crop through the grass toward him.

"If that's the serpent, then I'm Adam and you're Eve."

Beneath his flippancy, there was a note of sincerity that annoyed Daphne. She wasn't taking part in a silly flirtation—not she, of all people. Rising, hands in breeches pockets, chin tilted, she announced a little contemptuously:

"In that case, I'll enact the final scene—Eve expelled from the garden. Good-by."

"Please don't go so soon!" he begged. He had risen and stood beside her. "Have I offended you? Do you suppose I make a habit of hunting dryads? If I've seemed presumptuous, it's only because . . . I'll tell you the reason sometime."

"Of course I'm not offended," protested Daphne, denying what had been true. "Only don't labor under the delusion that I'm a simple little country girl. I'm as hard as . . . as . . ."

"As the heart of an oyster?"

She laughed in spite of herself, and the spirit of comradeship was reestablished.

He was standing so close that his eyes were fascinating daubs of blue. She felt a strange desire to straighten his bow-tie; instead she whistled for L'Aiglon.

"All right, you've given me fair warning. But let me tell you, young lady, I shan't swallow you whole. I'm after the pearl. You'll be coming for another sip of knowledge to-morrow?"

She shrugged, and pushed through the barricade of bushes, wishing she were not leaving so soon.

"I come every day."

"Then I'll be here to superintend the job, if I may."

"You'll be sick abed if you don't change your shoes."

She felt him watching her as she cantered along the shadowy path, but she did not look around. Suddenly she decided to stop in the village and have a little chat with her uncle.

While her father, Eldon Churchill, had been amassing a small fortune in the city, his brother Robert, a simple, cheerful soul, had spent the forty years clerking for Andrew Dodge. Yet Daphne, who despised the memory of her father, never thought of Uncle Robert without a feeling of gentle affection.

Hitching L'Aiglon to the gnawed post, she strode into the store, dimmed by flapping brown awnings. She loved the smell of hemp, kerosene, and excelsior, the glitter of new tins and the brightly painted lawn-mowers.

Uncle Robert was alone in the rear, filling a can with kerosene. Seeing his niece, he wiped his hands on a rag, and came to greet her, his sweeping mustache widening into a broad smile, the near-sighted eyes gleaming behind nickel spectacles. He was coatless, his rounded back hitched up his vest, exposing a segment of shirt at the waistline. His hairy arms were bare to the elbow and he inspected his hands doubtfully.

"Hello, Daphne; you're as welcome as an overdue shipment. Guess I'd better not shake; although a girl what dresses in pants and is goin' to be a lawyer oughtn't to be finicky, eh?"

"Pants—pooh! You know I look darned stylish. Mind if I smoke?"

He blinked thoughtfully for a few seconds.

"Maybe you'd better not, on account of the kerosene and—"

"Faker! You know you tremble for my reputation." She sat on the ancient counter and studied the small glass case beside her where a few choice articles were displayed on dusty blue velvet. That was where the pipe must have been.

"Who's the new man in town, Uncle Robert?"

"Tallish chap, with a lot of lion's mane?" Robert tapped his thin, grizzled hair.

"Exactly. Who is he?"

"Huh! I seem to be a sort of Who's Who around here. That's what he asked about you, Daffy. 'Who's the cute—' Well, I ain't goin' to give you a swelled head. Seems he's a stoppin' at the Bramton Hotel, when he ain't ridin' around in a car—what would look better for some of our auto polish."

Daphne traced the nickel seams of the glass case with her crop. He thought her cute, did he? Well, *he* was cute. Jerry, to rhyme with sherry! She lashed the side of her boot.

"Rather a bright chap, didn't you think, Uncle Robert?"

"He didn't show no signs of feeble-mindedness, as I could see."



Daphne made a face at him and slid off the counter.

"You ought to be end man at a minstrel show. If that's all you know, I'll be toddling along."

Uncle Robert hooked his thumbs through his suspenders; his twinkling eyes had become serious.

"You're right, Daphne, he is bright . . . as bright as a new tin pan. Get what I mean? It's a surface shine—the sort that'd tickle a girl like your sister Grace but not a clever college girl like you."

"Why, what do you know about him, Uncle Robert?" Her voice was truculent.

"I don't know anything. You asked what did I think, and those are my sentiments. But—pshaw!—you're able to handle a dozen like him and give back as good as he sends."

As she was leaving the store he called her back.

"We got somethin' in to-day that ought to interest you, now you've taken up smokin'." The twinkle was again visible as he beckoned her to a large packing-case, and, spilling the excelsior, produced a brown earthen cuspidor embellished with pink roses. "We're plannin' to tie ribbon bows on 'em for the ladies' trade."

She accorded him the laugh he felt he deserved, but as she untied L'Aiglon she wished she hadn't visited her uncle. Although, after all, his preju-

dice was typical of the local attitude toward urbanites.

Kicking her heels into L'Aiglon's flanks, she cantered up the oiled State road, and a smile parted her lips as his clattering hoofs echoed the words: "He thinks I'm cute! He thinks I'm cute!"

She could almost wish she were not a stoic.

## Chapter II

DAPHNE's grim philosophy was not entirely the result of her college education, but had had its origin when she was still a visionary, romantic child of fourteen. Her father, whom she had loved best of any one in the world, was the cause.

At sixteen years of age, Eldon Churchill had come to New York and started as a machine-oiler in a shoe factory. When he was twenty-four he took his careful savings, representing years of privation, and went into business for himself. The memory of his irate father, hunched in the low kitchen rocker, his back arched beneath pink suspenders, forcing swollen feet into Sunday cow-hide boots, inspired the son to produce Churchill's Easy Comfort Shoe. He made his appeal to the army of footsore laborers, including not only farmers but waitresses, nurses, conductors, policemen, and soldiers. He studied the human foot and recognized the importance of the three hinges,—the big toe, the heel, and the ball,—learning the value of supported arches and spread toes.

At thirty he paused in his indefatigable work long enough to marry Amelia Davis, a school-

teacher, who boarded in the same house. She was a tall, thin, timid woman, a year his junior, with a suppressed adoration for him that was attractively flattering. She expected very little attention and in no way interfered with his fifteen-hour working day.

Eldon found no time to bother with his elder daughter, Grace,—a pretty, self-conscious child,—but Daphne, born six years later, became his chum. They spun tops on the basement linoleum, played marbles on the parlor rug, and swapped agates and reels after serious meditation. In winter they skated in Prospect Park and in summer, cross-legged on the grass, played mumble-peg. She would “spank the baby” and “cut the cheese” with as much skill as he, and when she lost, valiantly dug down into the dirt and pulled out the peg with her strong square teeth, wiping the grit on her sleeve.

When she was twelve he built the summer home in Bramton—the only house in the village that boasted hardwood floors, electric lights, and more than one bath. Here he taught Daphne to ride bareback and play a man’s game of tennis, with a low, swift backhand stroke that did credit to her age as well as her sex.

When Daphne was fourteen her father was fifty, tall and lanky, with youthful broad shoulders. His thick hair and heavy overhanging eye-

brows were slightly grizzled and he assumed the low collar and black string-tie of a mid-Western congressman. Daphne loved him as a healthy animal loves food or warm sunshine.

Then she began to respond to the call of romance. In the morning when she took her bath, she would recite above the gushing water:

"O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,  
Through all the wide border his steed was the best . . ."

Men were grouped in two classes for Daphne—heroes and villains. She would rant on, gesticulating with a dripping face-cloth:

"For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,  
Was to wed the fair Ellen of young Lochinvar."

And her small freckled nose would wrinkle in disgust. Villains irritated her. There was no room for them in the scheme of life as outlined by her father. If they played the game squarely and were good sports, they wouldn't be villains. She would burst into song, loud and discordant:

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,  
And I will pledge with mine."

She loved to hear her voice vibrate in the narrow bathroom. It gave her a feeling of exultation,

made her aware of her great love for her father. He was always her hero—the swaggering cavalier of Scott's novels, E. M. Dell's rough diamonds, McCutcheon's princes. In the movies he was William S. Hart galloping down ravines, or the handsome Costello who made sweet love to Anita Stewart. About this time she began to wonder if her mother really appreciated him, she was so quiet, so undemonstrative in her devotion.

The winter Daphne was fifteen, just after Christmas, Mrs. Churchill had appendicitis, and while she was in the hospital Mr. Churchill took Daphne to see Sothern in "If I Were King." She sat through the play entranced, her head thrust forward, her black beaver hat crushed into a shapeless mass between her clenched hands.

Later, undressing in her hall room, she propped the program on her bureau and read the whole stanza in a loud dramatic whisper:

"If I were king—ah love, if I were king!  
What tributary nations would I bring  
To stoop before your sceptre, and to swear  
Allegiance to your lips and eyes and hair,  
Beneath your feet what treasures would I fling—  
The stars would be your pearls upon a string,  
The world a ruby for your finger ring,  
And you should have the sun and moon to wear  
If I were king.  
Let these wild dreams and wilder words take wing,

Deep in the woods I hear a shepherd sing  
A simple ballad to a sylvan air,  
Of love that ever finds your face more fair,  
I would not give you any godlier thing,  
If I were king."

She drew a deep breath and yanked her night-dress over her head. Love like that was exquisite! Lying in the narrow bed, she wondered what it would feel like to have a suitor. Outside, a steady sleet was gently drumming the pavement. It was the shepherd's song, a simple ballad! Suppose she were the Katherine that François Villon adored, and he were saying in deep delightful tones, "I would not give you any godlier thing, if I were king!" She hugged the blankets beneath her chin, her thin arms crossed over her small young breasts. Would any man love her like that! How beautiful! Suddenly she was afraid no one ever would. She wasn't pretty or clever; why should he? She finally fell asleep, crying gently over the thought of her unloved spinsterhood.

The next morning a dazzling white light woke her earlier than usual. Jumping up, she snapped open the register and, wrapping her sheer night-gown about her, scurried to close the window, but the view in the street, three floors below, held her spellbound!

Out of nothing—a few bare trees and a row of



city houses—fairyland had evolved! Ice covered everything, incasing the branches to the smallest twig, coating the sidewalk, the sides of houses, the railing, the street! More beautiful than any gift a king could give his love! Hundreds of thousands of icicles hung from roof-copings and window-casements with stupendous generosity, bending the trees with their weight of glory.

Daphne felt as if it were a present to her! "And you should have the sun and moon to wear, if I were king!" Ah, but this was infinitely more wonderful! As Daphne looked, the sun came out and the scene became a spectral glory. Diamonds, a million, trillion diamonds beneath her feet! Her exultation became painful. She wanted to share the rapture with her father, and, plunging into her clothes, she ran down the thickly carpeted stairs to catch him before he left.

At the dining-room door she stopped short, color drained from her cheeks as her staring eyes took in the unbelievable. That couldn't be her father! Impossible! That man holding the new Swedish waitress on his knees—her father? His face was entirely different. The keenness was gone. He smiled fatuously, as his hand moved restlessly over the buxom blue chambray bosom, and his steely eyes watered. Then, as she watched, over and over, with insatiable greed, he kissed the glowing cheek.

Daphne stared at him, stunned. Her father! The man she had idealized! Smothering a sob, she backed silently away, and fled to her room.

"For a laggard in love and a dastard in war."

Her breath came in little panting gasps. Kisses were meant to symbolize love! All the world, which a few moments ago had filled her with ecstasy, was nasty, filthy! A lump rose in her throat, a feeling of nausea.

The cold wind blew on her hair and melting icicles shattered with tinkling music, but Daphne was unconscious of everything, save this new, horrible realization. Gradually her revulsion turned to bitterness. Why had he taught her to love him when he was this sort of man? It would not have been as hard for Grace, who had cared so much less for him. He a hero! Scorn curled the young lips. He had taught her honesty and truthfulness, to face facts and play the game fairly, but he, he himself, was an impostor! A dastard!

She flung on an ulster, pulled a red tam-o'shanter over her short, uncombed hair and went out for a long, vigorous walk. The sun was turning the crystal world into dank puddles as unlovely as her thoughts. As she slopped through the wet with truculent strides, the icy water seeping into the shoes seemed to cool her burning thoughts until she forgot her own disillusion in a great aching

pity for her mother. She too was being deceived. How much worse to have one's husband a knave! Ought she to be told? Daphne had been taught that truth, at any cost, was preferable to lies. But the idea of actually relating the scene, filled her with returning nausea. Her father . . . that sort of man! She went without lunch and spent the afternoon at a movie, struggling to decide where-in lay her duty, the more miserable because it was the first problem she had not been able to take to her father.

When she returned, exhausted, at six o'clock, no nearer a decision, she learned from the innocent-looking Freda that her father had gone on a hurried business trip to Chicago. Her lip curled scornfully. Perhaps he was off with some other lady-love. Why should she ever believe in him again?

She and Grace ate alone in the big dining-room. The elder Churchill girl was twenty-one—handsome, a bit too self-conscious, with social aspirations.

"For Heaven's sake, Daffy, where have you been all day? I didn't let on to Mother that you were missing." Grace did not wait for an answer. The whereabouts of a child of fifteen was of no importance once the child had returned. "Mother says Judge Day's will was in the paper and he left

his daughter a cool half-million. Glen Bruce stepped into a butter-tub when he married her!"

A great sigh of relief escaped Daphne.

"For Heaven's sake! what's the matter?"

"Nothing," Daphne answered shortly. But an idea relaxed her pent-up soul. She would confide her trouble to Mr. Bruce, the family lawyer, and get his advice. His position in the family was more than professional; he had once been a Bramton boy, and Grandma Churchill was his god-mother. Although he had married his employer's daughter and fallen heir to a lucrative practice, he was just as kind and unpretentious as in the days of his junior clerkship, when she played on the rolling ladder in the law library.

Monday morning, regardless of school, she sat in Mr. Bruce's waiting-room, planning how she could relate her trouble without incriminating her father.

Glen Bruce arrived promptly at nine-thirty, crowding the little room with his bigness, for he was six feet two, and proportionately broad of shoulder; handsome in a big, healthy way, with ruddy cheeks and scrutinizing gray eyes. Dressed with meticulous care, he looked like a varsity football captain on his way to see his best girl.

"Well, Miss Daphne! Sorry to keep you waiting; you'll be late to school!" A crisp coldness

clung to his great chinchilla overcoat. "Mother want to know something? How is she? I've been getting excellent reports."

"She's all right; coming home Thursday. It isn't that . . . Can I . . . may I speak to you alone?"

He ushered her into his large office, with three windows facing the harbor. Old Judge Day had bought the golden-oak furniture over a quarter of a century ago, and many important councils had been held around the big carved center table. Through the open door the narrow library was visible with its rolling ladder. Beyond was the little room Glen Bruce had once occupied.

"You see I'm clinging to this ancient furniture as long as I can," he apologized, "but when my wife gets her way, I'll be very fine with Chinese rugs and mahogany." He smiled ruefully. "However, I'll never be half as fond of the new elegance as I am of this."

"It doesn't pay to be fond of anything. I've just found that out," she answered bitterly, hunching herself in the consultant's chair.

His steady, inquisitive eyes studied the girl thoughtfully, and he smoothed his thick brown hair, with its even high lights. "You'll be changing your mind one of these days, Miss Daphne. It's love that makes the world go round."

Love. Ugh!

"I wish I could be a lawyer," she said, breathing the desire as it was born. It would be safer to trust a profession than a man. She remembered her mission and her eyes filled with tears of pity for her mother.

"Something the matter?" he asked gently.

She pulled herself together. He musn't suppose it was her father.

"I have a friend, Mr. Bruce, a girl who discovered by accident that her father was not what she had supposed him to be . . . not good, you understand." She tightened her hold on the school-books and plunged on, her lips stiff: "She wonders if it is her duty to tell her mother, so I said I would ask you, and she'll abide by your decision."

He nodded and crossed a black-silk ankle over a well-creased knee.

"Exactly what did she discover, Daphne?"

Her head sank, her voice became a whisper.

"She saw her father holding their maid on his lap and kissing her, again and again and again." Unconsciously she wiped her mouth. "Up to that time she supposed her father perfect. Now she feels terribly responsible. Should she tell her mother the truth, or is it better to let her go on believing in him?"

"I'm sorry your little friend made that unpleasant discovery." Bruce spoke with feeling. "But tell

her I say to forget all about it. It isn't really her tragedy; it's her mother's."

Daphne nodded with relief.

"She didn't want to tell. Her mother has awfully high principles and she'd probably divorce him—"

"There's love that lives 'in spite of' rather than 'because of,' if you know what I mean," Bruce said, walking with her to the door. "But let this be a lesson to you, when you marry—"

"I never shall. I'm going to be a lawyer."

"Good, I'll let you serve your clerkship here. But even lawyers marry. I did."

She smiled feebly.

"Don't let this rob you of your ideals, Daphne. There are as many good men as there are good women."

"Maybe," she agreed. *He* was good. She was sure of that.

"And never compromise with less."

She shivered, as she had a hundred times since Saturday. That restless hand mauling the blue chambray . . . Then there echoed in her mind: "If I were king, ah, love, if I were king." Surely there were beautiful loves.

"I promise, Mr. Bruce, I never will."



## Chapter III

ALTHOUGH Glen Bruce's advice relieved Daphne of all personal responsibility, she found it impossible to forget the incident for ten minutes at a time. Her father a man like that! Why had he wanted to take Freda on his lap when he might have held Daphne? She failed every recitation that day, scarcely conscious of her surroundings, as she asked herself, over and over, what was this thing called passion.

And Mr. Bruce's advice about being careful whom one married . . . How could one tell? Impossible to trust any one more than she had trusted her father, and what had happened? Again her thoughts turned in sympathy to his unsuspecting wife!

There had never been any congeniality between Daphne and her timid, reserved mother. Mrs. Churchill had assumed the humble position of a faithful servant and Daphne had carelessly accepted her servitude. Now, quite suddenly, she felt a new tenderness for her mother, and on her way from school spent half a week's allowance on a little midwinter bunch of violets.

Hurrying up Fulton Street with her offering, she saw Kitty Borah, a friend whose mother kept a boarding-house. Daphne was a little scornful of the elder girl, she was so obviously impressed with the Churchills' recent financial success. Also, earlier in the winter, Kitty had hinted at a romance with one of the boarders, whereupon Daphne had freely expressed her scorn. It was ridiculous for a girl of sixteen to talk of suitors. But to-day she was avid to hear more about the perilous adventure which might mean Elysian fields or a quagmire.

Kitty's heavy, dissatisfied expression brightened as Daphne, panting, caught up with her.

"How's your *affaire du cœur*, Kitty?" she asked, as soon as greetings had been exchanged. "A couple of months ago you were raving about an Arthur—"

"Pooh! I sent him packing." The voice was scornful, but fear lurked in the green eyes.

"Good thing. You're too young, and girls can make such terrible mistakes."

"You said it." Kitty's sneer was unpleasant. "I loathe and despise men; they're a lot of selfish beasts. Ugh! If I were a Catholic, I'd be a nun." The black caracul muff was squeezed between tense arms.

She meant—she must mean—men like Eldon Churchill! The daughter, hot with sudden shame,

re-lived that sickening revelation of two days ago. Freda! Now Kitty! Did it mean that Kitty was really a bad girl, a Hester Prynne, a Scarlet Woman? No, no, Daphne couldn't believe it. Humiliation would kill any girl. Feeling obliged to say something, she found herself quoting Glen Bruce:

"All men aren't like that, Kitty; some of them are just as noble as good women."

"But how can you tell what they are, before it is too late?" lamented the older girl, as Daphne had a few hours before.

"I know, that's the trouble. Marriage is a dangerous business. I've just decided to be a lawyer." With the abruptness of youth, she tossed aside the subject that had monopolized her thoughts for three days, and launched into her new proposal. "Mr. Bruce says I can be his clerk. He's our lawyer. A perfect peach. Big as Atlas, with cheeks like raspberry lollipops. I'd love to go to business every morning in a mannish blue-serge suit, with a newspaper tucked under my arm."

"I'm getting a job next month, but I don't look forward to it so especially," grumbled Kitty, as they paused before an iron gate.

The Brooklyn Hospital, a red brick building winged on each side, stood back from the clanging trolley street, on a lovely grassy hill. As Daphne slowly climbed the steep path, her mind returned

to Kitty's trenchant remark. Had she really been bad? And once more Daphne dismissed the thought as impossible.

Mrs. Churchill was a gaunt, ill-favored woman, humbly conscious of her unloveliness. As she lay in bed, her long thin nose seemed to divide her face, as if the little eyes, hating each other, had reared a spite-fence. Two attenuated gray braids hung over her sharp shoulders, her flat wrists protruded awkwardly from the long-sleeved canton-flannel nightgown, and her legs made two meager ridges in the counterpane, extending to the foot of the bed; everything about her was long, thin, and ugly. But the mother love that suddenly brightened the narrow face was beautiful.

Usually Daphne and the nurse, Miss Walters, played a keen game of chess, but as the starched uniform rustled toward the closet for the board, Daphne protested:

"Mother and I are going to talk, this afternoon, Miss Walters. I haven't seen her since Friday." She felt the thin fingers squeeze her hand appreciatively.

When Mrs. Churchill received the flowers, tears webbed the sparse lashes. "The second surprise today. Your father telephoned from Chicago this morning." There was no doubting the pride in the wife's voice.

"Telephoned from Chicago!" echoed Daphne,

her throat tightening. "My, but he is solicitous!"

"I should say he was," agreed Miss Walters. "And he's mighty fascinating, too."

Daphne resented the praise. A husband should be fascinating only to his wife.

In the weeks and months that passed Daphne thought often of her father and the departed Freda. Had it been an affair of the minute, or did he still see her? Again and again, as he sat at the head of the table, she pictured him fondling the rosy immigrant, and a wave of nausea would sweep over her. She hid her feeling as best she could and kept out of his way, offering her studies as an excuse.

Undoubtedly the whole affair would have gradually been submerged in the healthy round of life had she not received another shock late the following spring. Mrs. Churchill had a slight attack of grippe and her husband, in his masterful way, ignoring her protests, had sent for the trained nurse, Miss Walters. One evening, dashing into the upstairs sitting-room with medicine, Daphne saw her father abruptly remove his arm from Miss Walters's crisp waist.

The girl's blazing eyes caught her father's. With shoulders high, exactly like him when he was angry, she turned on her heel and strode up to her room.

A minute later he knocked, and without wait-

ing for an answer, came in, closing the door. His face was pale, his lips dry; but his manner was ingratiating, as if he were coaxing a child.

"You're not going to be silly and think I meant anything by that, Daphne."

She looked at him scornfully, arms crossed, chin high, intolerance in every gesture. Fierce condemnation burned within her, fed by a sense of injustice. What had she ever done to deserve such a father?

"You realize it wasn't anything at all, don't you, Daphne? Be a good sport and forget it."

But youth is not the age for dispensing mercy.

"I've been a good sport for six months, but I'll never forget. I saw you with Freda, too." She was surprised at her own vehemence, it left her trembling so that she leaned against the little white bureau.

Her father's pale face turned gray, the keen eyes half closed, and he nodded his head slowly. His buoyancy was gone; he had received judgment from which there was no appeal.

"So that's it," he said slowly. "You've been different, Daphne. I thought you were outgrowing me." He drew a deep breath and straightened his wide shoulders, in one final attempt: "You don't understand life, Daphne."

"Would you want me to marry a man like you?" she interrupted with burning scorn, but down in

her heart she wanted him to cry out in self-justification.

Instead there was a dead silence followed by a depreciatory laugh.

"I'd like you to have a perfect man, Daphne. I'm not that; but you exaggerate. Be a good little girl," he took a step toward her, holding out his hands—the hands that had fondled the Swedish girl.

"Don't!" she protested, shrinking away from him. "Don't come any nearer . . . Please go . . . I can't bear it." She felt too weak to stand; groping toward her narrow bed, she flung herself face down on the counterpane, and broke into convulsive sobs.

Nothing else she might have said or done could have so moved her father. He was the cause of her agony without the power to comfort her. For a moment he stood over her, his hand poised above the short brown hair, then, with a hopeless sigh, he left her.

That spring America entered the World War and thousands of Buddies who cheerfully tramped off in khaki wore Churchill's Comfort Shoes, doubling the business in a few months. During the summer Daphne's father commuted to Bramton with great irregularity. Each night her mother would stand on the porch, gazing down the road,



a look of tragedy in her small eyes, and when all hope was abandoned, she would murmur: "This war! He's so busy." But Daphne had her own fears and worried lest her mother grow suspicious. She found herself dreading the evenings. The tension of train-time spoiled her days; in the middle of a tennis game she would miss an easy back-hand, wondering if her father would be up that night.

It was he who freed her from the perpetual worry, which had ruined her summer and made her apprehensive of the winter, by suggesting boarding-school.

"I'd love it!" she said with unflattering fervor.

She spent the next two years at Miss Hall's Academy for Girls, on the Hudson, kept by a school-mate of Mrs. Churchill's whose morals were as rigid as her high-boned collars. Daphne gloried in the reputation of a radical, and at eighteen she entered Smith, where her air of sophistication made her acceptable to the little group of serious destroyers. To her surprise, she was the conservative. They considered wrong all that ever had been; they scorned the Sermon on the Mount and felt competent to re-carve the worn-out decalogue. Daphne listening to their harangues, disagreed with them, and conducted her own heated dissertations to a less advanced group. Her theme was the pernicious petting

plague, resultant of the World War. Her argument ran thus:

"Without discounting Freud and sex, we girls should teach our heads to rule our hearts. The institution of marriage is fundamental to civilization, and don't you forget it. But the trouble is we don't go at it with any intelligence. Half the girls get engaged when they are intoxicated with kisses, and pay for it with a life of misery, or else bust up the marriage. Sublimate your emotions, so you don't get tripped up by mere passion. For my part, I'm going to be a lawyer. If a suitable marriage with reasonable expectations of happiness presents itself, I'll marry; otherwise I'm not ashamed to be a spinster."

She sublimated her adolescent emotions in such an excellent game of tennis that the unspectacled freshmen, who cared nothing for "bedroom bull," courted her society, making her an athletic as well as an intellectual favorite.

At Christmas-time she returned home, radiantly happy, and at peace with the world, even her father. She believed he had at last awakened to the sanctity of marriage, and she was tolerantly willing to forgive the past. As a peace offering she had laboriously embroidered his initials on three silk handkerchiefs, knowing that he would appreciate the significance of her toil. It was delightful to cast off the haunting contempt that had ruined

their relationship for the past three years, for she had missed him cruelly.

Her mother and Grace met her at the Grand Central Station. Grace at twenty-four was a reproachful example of what her mother should have been. They were the same height, but Mrs. Churchill's handsome Persian lamb coat hung from her thin shoulders as if it were empty, while Grace's mauve suit exhibited a fashionable slenderness. The one's face was sallow and horse-shaped, the other's oval with cheeks exquisitely tinted. Even in that self-absorbed Christmas crowd, not a few people flattered Grace with a second glance.

Daphne hurried up to them, sagging under the weight of her old straw suitcase, her camel's-hair coat buttoned wrong in her haste.

"For Heaven's sake call a red-cap," ordered her disgusted sister. The girls bickered most of the time, for Grace had never outgrown her jealousy of the "new baby," and Daphne tolerated no patronage.

"Why? I'm as husky as they," protested the college athlete.

Mrs. Churchill smiled adoringly at this younger child, whom she did not in the least understand.

"You've put on weight, dear, haven't you?"

"You'd think she was Flossie's baby and must gain four ounces a week," protested Grace, unbuttoning the tan ulster. "Do try to look respec-

table, Daphne; Mother's going to take us to the Biltmore for tea. What is there about improving the brains that makes a girl a perfect dowd?"

"That's one of the very few questions I can't answer," Daphne said with sweet sarcasm.

They paused while the straw suitcase was checked. Daphne slipped an arm through each of theirs. It was good to be home. (She wasn't going to take any stylish cinnamon toast just to please Grace; she wanted a gooey parfait, half a foot high.) She loved the bustling activity all about her, the holly and scarlet ribbon in the underground shops, the happy, bundle-laden commuters. As they mounted the thickly carpeted stairs of the Biltmore, the atmosphere of hurried purpose gave place to an opulent leisure, the mingling of a cheery, care-free holiday crowd: girls with thin laughs and thick cosmetics; young matrons conscious of their beauty; older women relying on their vivacity; a few men, flattering in their attention.

"I wish we'd give up the Brooklyn house and come to a New York hotel for the winter months," sighed Grace, turning to look at a man wearing white chamois gloves. "I adore this atmosphere."

Daphne was about to make some scornful retort about social sycophants, when she caught a glimpse of a familiar pair of shoulders, a low collar, and a black string-tie. The rest of the man

was cut off, but she could see his companion, a little woman with corn-silk hair and a big lavender hat; her hand, in its white glove heavily stitched with black, lay possessively in the crook of the man's sleeve.

Daphne felt herself grow tense. They were coming toward her. It couldn't be! Other men wore . . . For one brief instant, in the milling crowd, Daphne's eyes met her father's. The woman was saying in a husky voice:

"Hurry, Eldon; I'm dying for a fox-trot."

Daphne made a futile effort to drag her mother to the left, but she knew by the stony expression on the thin face that she was too late. Her mother knew! The secret Daphne had guarded for years and was ready to forget, had turned into an ugly undeniable fact. Joy died, the Christmas spirit was killed, her peace-offering ironic!

Grace majestically led the way into the tea-room and gave their order to the unctuous waiter. Daphne was too miserable to substitute a parfait for the cinnamon toast; what difference did it make? When she saw her mother furtively dab her eyes, sending a diagonal streak across the sallow cheek, she could hold silence no longer.

"Oh Mother, why do you endure it?"

Mrs. Churchill made no attempt to hide the cause of her tears.

"Please don't talk about it, dear."

"I will!" protested the girl, her pent-up emotions breaking out. "It isn't anything new, Mother; I discovered it years ago. Why do you—"

"For Heaven's sake keep quiet!" interrupted Grace. "Of course every one knows about it, but you don't have to shout it out at the top of your lungs."

Daphne looked at her sister, utterly dumfounded. Her secret was common property! Her mother had known about it for years and had gone on living with him! How could she? The question slipped between her lips almost without her volition. "And you go on living with him, Mother?"

Mrs. Churchill fumbled with her napkin.

"You don't understand, dear . . ."

"I certainly don't!" agreed the girl ruthlessly.

"But if you wouldn't talk about it any more . . .?"

Her mother's humble manner touched Daphne, without lessening her scorn.

"All right, I'm through forever. It's your affair."

Her thoughts were harsh and crashing, out of all harmony with the delicate stringed orchestra beside them. Her mother had known for years that he was faithless, yet she had gone on loving him, her devotion bitter with suffering. The girl's young face became stern and set. Every one had



the right to happiness. If a woman married a man who proved faithless she ought to cut him out of her life as relentlessly as a malignant growth. The horrible simile pleased her, and she lingered over it, expanding it . . . a cancer eating into the soul of a woman.

The waiter's white cotton-gloved hand set down her silver service, and she bit viciously into the dark cinnamon toast.

That night she burned the three silk handkerchiefs, on her china brush-and-comb tray: the symbol of forgiveness went up in a smoking flame. She was through with compromises, a leopard did not change his spots. Hereafter she would be pitiless in her intelligent judgment.

The following April, succumbing to a disease which he had hidden from his family, Eldon Churchill dropped dead of angina pectoris.

As Daphne noted the rugged dignity of the man lying in the casket, she wilfully checked the tender memories that blurred her eyes; the vision of him playing mumble-peg, cross-legged on the grass, and a score of others that rose before her. He had robbed her of her girlhood illusions. Resolutely she blinked away the tears before they fell.



## Chapter IV

THE natives of Bramton were hard and sharp, like their village common in summer, when the ground baked to clay and the grass dried to little spears. There is a tolerance, resultant of contact, which these people missed, who boasted of the forty miles that separated them from the wickedness of New York.

When Eldon Churchill built the big square house on the hill, his native townspeople received him with scant hospitality. Echoes of his indiscretions had preceded him and jealousy was disguised under the cloak of outraged purity. He might be rich enough to have electricity and silly enough to build three baths, but they wouldn't be bribed into countenancing sin.

After his death, Mrs. Churchill broke up the city home, and she and Grace spent the winter months in a New York hotel. High-an'-mighty they were, said the Bramtonites, who nevertheless displayed the new mausoleum with pride. "Churchill's buried there; you know, the shoe king." But they turned their scorn on Daphne—a college girl who went about in breeches and

smoked cigarettes! They had no use for the new breed of flappers.

Daphne laughed at their condemnation. She was much too busy with tennis and L'Aiglon to worry over frumpy country people.

With the advent of Jerry, however, the peaceful monotony of her vacation gave way to a new and delightful sense of excitement. Daily they met in Eden and night after night she was late to dinner. He made no secret of his admiration, and often Daphne scolded herself. If this were not a flirtation, what was? In bed she would promise herself to skip the secret tryst on the morrow, but with the morning light she would be planning her afternoon costume. She was far richer in habits than in dresses, and Jerry was an excellent critic.

By the middle of the second week she reassured her troubled conscience. He was leaving on Saturday and the foolish little adventure would be over. How the girls at college would rag her, if they ever learned of her secret meetings in the woods! But as the time approached, a great depression settled on her. It wasn't, she assured herself, that she was falling in love with him in the least, but he was awfully good fun and naturally she would miss him.

His last afternoon! They sat in the deep grass,

and he paused in exulting over his business, to fill the pipe he had bought at Dodge's.

"I don't just sell printing, Daphne. I sell ideas! You'd love it. Last month I did a book for an interior decorator; I'm crazy now to remodel a house. When I go back I've a piano catalogue to get out. It makes one's interest as wide as the world and as varied as a circus. You'd be a wiz at it."

When he went back . . . He was looking forward to returning! She flicked a plantain weed with her crop.

"Thanks for the applesauce, Jerry. But I don't want my business to be a circus. I'd prefer getting my teeth into one definite profession and holding on with a bulldog grip."

"You're serious about being a lawyer? Isn't building a home just as vital a profession?" His voice was soft, earnest, regretful. It set her heart drumming against her ribs, she tried to check it by repeating part of her bumptious college argument:

"A woman isn't a home-maker any more. My grandmother was. She held the nails when my grandfather built the house she's still living in. She boiled the paste for the wall-paper, crocheted the rugs, and painted the kitchen. She cared for the chickens and children! That's a home-maker.

But modern middle-class wives live the pampered useless existence of sob-sisters."

"You sound like a savage feminist and you look like a sweet little girl who's being saucy and ought to go to bed without dessert. Which are you?" he joked.

"Neither. Just an ordinary critter hunting for happiness, and I believe women have more chance if they master a good vocation and live by their heads rather than their hearts. Too many girls have been life slaves to a transient emotion."

A long silence. She dared not look at him. If he knew how her heart was pounding! Shoulders high, she shifted her gaze from the grass to the flowing brook. She imagined it murmured a sad message to the clay bank about life not being what it was when romantic lovers sat at its mossy edge. A frog hopped on a wet stone and grinned at her sardonically, as much to say, "Now you've done it."

"I know I sound hard and relentless. I am! I want to be."

"Why, Daphne?" he asked very gently.

She held up her face and shook back the straight ear-locks.

"Probably because I once knew a woman who married a faithless man and her wretchedness made me bitter."

He moved closer to her, so that she could

glimpse a bit of the tweed suit out of the corner of her eye, and it comforted her.

"But all marriages are not like that, Daphne," he argued wistfully.

"No, of course not," she agreed, lowering her eyes. "I'm not preaching against marriage, but for fewer and better unions. Let a girl establish herself in a job, just as a man does, instead of using marriage as a vocation; then she can make an intelligent selection, and not fall for mere sex appeal."

"You're only twenty, Daphne dear."

She closed her eyes, that he might not see the quivering lids. *Daphne dear*. Was she really dear? Tender emotions possessed her. Suppose he were not a flirt!

"I'm eight years older than you, and that's a lot. Your little hidebound new edition of woman's place is all wrong. A woman can have but one real vocation, and it's the biggest profession in the world, all other jobs are merely stop-gaps to fill in the time. I don't believe any ten-thousand-dollar-a-year secretary is as useful to civilization as my mother was, running her home."

Daphne was too stirred to argue further. What an adorable child he must have been, with coppery curls and cobalt-blue eyes!

"Tell me about your boyhood, Jerry."

"Father died before I can remember, and

Mother and I lived with Grandfather in a little parsonage."

"Parsonage?" she repeated hopefully. Uncle Robert had thought him a wild city blade.

"Yes, Grandfather was a Methodist minister. He's a helpless paralytic now and lives with an aunt out West. He has a full white beard, like Santa Claus. . . . I used to give him neckties for Christmas and was broken-hearted because they didn't show. . . . He always preached the same sermon, 'Brotherly Love.' "

Daphne drew a deep, contented sigh, born of a new security. Jerry was the grandson of a minister. It made a tremendous difference, somehow. He had the same principles as she. Uncle Robert had been utterly wrong.

"And your mother, Jerry?"

"Mother died during the war. I was training at camp and I couldn't get home to see her. Oh, Daphne, she was wonderful! She was small—she had to stand on her tiptoes to kiss me—with henna hair and pale-blue eyes. Often when I go to bed, I try to dream of her." He smoothed his bright hair with a thoughtful gesture, and went on softly, "She never used to scold me, but the hurt look in her big eyes filled me with misery."

The trees and bushes, the brook and the grass melted into a solid mass before Daphne's blurred

vision. Poor Jerry! She had never thought of pitying him before.

"Let's change the subject, Daphne. There are times when it nearly kills me to remember I'll never see her again."

"I . . . I wish I could help you, Jerry." Why hadn't he told her about his family days and days ago? She yearned over him, releasing her emotions in a glorious outpouring of pity.

"I expect you to, Daphne. I'm counting on it."

"Yes you are!" her pity had turned to bitterness. "You'll forget I ever existed, once you get back to town." This was exactly what she promised herself she would not say—and it had slipped out.

"Forget?" His intent gaze sent the blood throbbing in her throat, emblazoning her cheeks with the love she denied.

"I'm a poor salesman if you believe that. Oh Daphne . . ." He reached for her hand, drew back suddenly, and turning, stared at the brook.

"I bought a commutation ticket to-day. I can get to Eden by four o'clock every afternoon if . . . if you want me."

Every afternoon! Ecstasy burned in Daphne's veins. The glittering stream, the sunlit leaves became a glorious pyrotechnic.

Without waiting for an answer, he presented another question:



"Isn't it about time you invited me to call? May I come to-night?"

She shot him a radiant smile and the blush that crimsoned her cheeks extended down the opened V at her neck, but her answer was purged of all sentiment.

"Sure, come ahead, and you'll see that when I'm dressed as God intended I'm a total loss."

Michael, the chauffeur-gardener, was combing the blue gravel when Daphne raced up the circular drive, her heart pounding at the thought of her visitor. She looked at the substantial square house with bay-windows on each side, the excellent lawns interspersed with crescents of flaming cannas and even rows of hydrangeas; for Eldon Churchill had planned his summer home with a geometric perfection, as if to atone for the irregularities of his own life. Would Jerry think it all stupid and smug? And her mother . . . What a shock she would be!

The patient Michael coughed, to remind her of his presence. With a start she looked down and tossed him the reins, noticing his eyes for the first time, because they were blue.

"Some flowers for the library, Michael, please."

Her bedroom she had named the "office," having bought the flat mahogany desk, the swivel chair, and the sectional bookcases at an office-

furnishing company; the sleeping and dressing perquisites—a slim Windsor bed, and a narrow chiffonier—she had tucked behind the door, to make the sobriquet appropriate. Her thoughts were strictly feminine, however, as she flung open her closet door and inspected her meager collection of limp dresses. With growing disgust she was just releasing the least-despised costume, when Grace called to her from her “boudoir” across the hall:

“Come here a minute, Daphne; I’ve got some news.”

Grace reclined on a chaise-longue before the bay-window; creamy curtains billowed in the background, with an even, caressing motion, and the rose rug added a flush to the twilight. Of a tender green was the enameled furniture, adorned with delicate sprays of moss-roses; the taffeta bedspread and hangings quivered between green and rose, with impartial generosity, while a coral-plumed pen on the writing-desk reflected itself in the mirrors of bureau, dressing-table, and cheval-glass, dotting the room with brightness. The place was as lovely as a spring garden, and nothing emphasized the dissimilarity of the sisters more than their rooms.

At twenty-six, Grace had developed a discontented expression that was accentuated by her narrow pear-shaped face; and cosmetics could not quite equal her erstwhile charming complexion.

With gracious superiority she had discouraged impecunious suitors, until she was the last unmarried girl in her set, and found herself no more congenial with her old friends, deep in the care and feeding of infants, than she was with the hoydenish younger folks who played tennis with Daphne. Of all her admirers, only Archibald Meeks, the minister of the Bramton Presbyterian Church, remained. Ever since his installation, four years before, he had been her devoted slave.

"Here's a bit of news, Daphne!" Grace held up a gold-monogramed paper. "From Eleanor Dundee. She's divorced her good-for-nothing husband and his folks have settled a generous sum on her; if Eleanor says it's generous, it must be. Think of it!—beautiful, rich, and divorced at twenty-seven! There's romance for you!" Grace sighed and tucked the lacy pillow under her glossy black hair.

Daphne had never seen Eleanor Dundee, so her scorn was fundamental, rather than personal.

"Romantic? Your idea of romance must be inspired by the daily illustrated! These beautiful rich divorcees of twenty-seven give me a pain." As she was talking the vehemence died out of her voice, for she had caught her reflection in the cheval-glass: a round animated face incased in straight dark-brown hair, bright cheeks, bright teeth, bright eyes. Jerry thought she looked cute: would he be disappointed to-night? Suppose his

flattering, intense gaze shifted from her to Grace. For the first time Daphne feared her sister.

"What are you doing to-night, Grace?"

"I promised Archie I'd be leading lady in the operetta . . . rehearsal this evening. Anyway, dear, your little friends bore me to death."

Daphne stood up and studied the effect she made with her hands in her breeches pockets, as she answered cheerfully:

"Really, old thing? You're missing a genuine treat. The stunningest man is coming to call! You'd go crazy over him; eyes as blue as the sky, oodles of hair like a lion's mane, and such a voice!" She rolled her eyes and tried to look at her reflection at the same time. "If he were to say: 'You damn fool,' it would sound like a symphony in D minor."

Grace raised herself on her elbow.

"I saw him in the village the other day. Who is he?"

"A friend of mine." Daphne swayed from heel to toe, irritatingly.

"Such an intimate friend you don't even know his name!"

"Don't I? His name is Jeremiah, but he's called Jerry; his last name is Veerland; his grandfather was a minister; and he's just gotten over the grippe."

"Office boy on a vacation," mused Grace, sink-

ing back on the cushions. "You can have him, my dear."

"Thanks so much." Daphne started for the door and then paused. "When the office boy calls to-night, I haven't a decent rag to wear. Lend me a dress and I'll give you two dollars for that Breath of Violet sachet you wanted."

"Hard hit as all that? The sachet's three dollars." Grace's dark-brown, slightly protruding eyes grew calculating. "You can borrow that gray voile with roses—"

"That old thing! You filthy Shylock, I've got better than that, myself. I was thinking of your green malines. You say it looks punk on you."

"But it's brand-new. I wouldn't let you have *that* for any two dollars. Tell you what: I'll include the silver slippers and gray stockings, and curl your hair, all for the price of Breath of the Violets."

"Agreed. I'll be ready for you in half an hour, slave." And Daphne strode out, chin high, like a little boy playing soldier.

## Chapter V

THE library, Daphne decided, was too bright. Jerry liked subdued lights and Grace had overlooked no possible excuse for a lamp. They daubed the room with overlapping colors, in every height and variety. Snapping out all but the one at each end of the davenport table, she reduced the illumination to an amber glow, which faded into subtle shadows.

Michael had filled the blue bowl with rich garnet roses and she pressed the cool petals to her scorching cheeks slowly, sensuously breathing the heavy fragrance. Jerry loved flowers!

An automobile horn sounded—one long, two staccato notes—and her heart answered the summons with quick palpitation. The full green malines skirt swirled about her legs and the little curls vibrated with a femininity that was strangely pleasing to this devotee of riding-habits, as she hurried to open the door.

Jerry, unnaturally tidy, his hair slicked back, still damp from the comb, seized both her hands and held her at arm's length.

"Daphne . . . adorable!" With old-fashioned gallantry, he kissed each square tanned hand.

"I think I look like a circus rider." Even if she couldn't control her heartbeats, she could hide them. Balanced on the toe of Grace's slightly tarnished slipper, she held her arms outstretched.

"See! I'm on a white horse!"

"Jump through the hoop! I dare you!" he cried, making a circle of his arms.

Daphne felt very gay, very daring . . . but this wasn't love.

"No. Rumple your hair, and be a roaring lion. I'm a tight-rope walker, now." She tiptoed along the edge of the library rug, to the divan, placed at right angles to the fire, and, perching on the wide arm, her feet sunk in the cushions, apologized: "Excuse smoldering logs in the middle of summer, but I can't bear to waste a hearth. If you're too hot, sit over by the window."

"Thanks a lot. Wonder you don't send me out to the porch." He dropped upon the divan, beside her feet. "I'm beginning to believe you are hard-hearted. Why aren't you as sweet and gentle as you look?"

Her hand lay in the foamy malines lap; he reached for it, but she thrust it behind her.

"No, can't be done. I'm the last prude since the Great War."

"With me, Daphne?" His steady gaze fright-



ened her. Was the approaching climax to be reached to-night? She wasn't ready. Why couldn't they go on as they were?

"Certainly. There are no exceptions in my rocky philosophy." But her hand seemed suddenly to possess a separate entity, which resented her statement and wished that it might nestle in Jerry's clasp. "To-morrow," she went on, attempting to quell the rebellion, "is my grandmother's birthday. Mr. Bruce, our lawyer, is coming for the week-end. He's the man who has promised me a clerkship."

"You're not really planning to work for the old fossil?"

Daphne gave him one of her wide, infectious smiles.

"If you chance to meet a big, stunning chap of thirty-odd, who wears his clothes like an illustration of Hart, Shaffner, and Marx and happens to be a rich widower, that's my future boss."

"The devil!" Wistfully serious was the mouth that smiled so easily.

More intense grew the longing to slip her hand into his. Was he really jealous?

"He means a lot to you, Daphne?" Jerry's voice was little more than a whisper.

She shook her head, her wiry curls vibrating.

"I love him as you love your dear old grandfather. He's nice and serious."

Jerry smiled radiantly and drew a deep breath.

"Another argument against being nice and serious." He gently caressed the button of her slipper with a slim forefinger, now and again grazing her instep, sending an electric current up her leg, tingling, heating, chilling.

She sat very still on the arm of the maroon davenport, her head, with its spoolish curls, slightly bent, showing the gradations of tan fading into creamy whiteness. She was permitting that which she had vociferously condemned at college. Her denim-couch philosophy had included phrases like this: "If you can't be emotionally free, girls, for any sake select your beaus with a little rationality, instead of mere sensual intoxication." . . . "How can you think with intelligence if you jazz your brains with thrills?" . . . "A lot of girls have married cads while they were asphyxiated with their kisses." . . . "Intelligence first, emotions afterward." Yet here she sat in the soft, yellow lamplight, filmy layers of malines falling provocatively about her slim legs, sanctioning the first stage in the pernicious art of petting. Not only did she permit it but she quivered under Jerry's slightest touch. Her whole consciousness seemed collected under that revolving finger that every so often caressed her instep.

A rose petal fluttered to the polished table—a

tiny, rich red basin. The motion attracted them both.

"See the chalice, Daphne? Isn't it exquisite?" He reached over and held it tenderly on the palm of his slender hand. "That would be my theme if I were a minister. Beauty! The shade matches your lips." He touched her mouth with the cool petal, then slipped it into his breast pocket.

Daphne trembled, afraid of the emotion he awakened. She dared not look at him, but toyed with the little bronze book-ends beside her. Athletes, they were, digging their shoulders into the limp-leather volumes. Did Jerry really love her? How did girls act who were used to such compliments? She must steer the conversation into safer channels. Moving one of the little men, she watched him brace his shoulder for the slipping books. That was the way she should be—stalwart, resolute. If only she didn't feel so shaky! Eleanor Dundee's long creamy envelop lay on the table and Daphne broke into a rambling discourse:

"Grace thinks it's very romantic to be beautiful, married, and divorced at twenty-seven, like a friend of hers, but I think it's a tragedy intelligent girls will learn to avoid. . . . I wonder if Eleanor knew he was no good when she married him."

Jerry frowned and sat back, locking his fingers over his knee.

"Mightn't the poor cuss have had a little good tucked down somewhere out of sight, Daphne?"

She flashed him an affectionate smile which he missed. For once he was not looking at her.

"Now you're preaching your grandfather's sermon of brotherly love. Maybe, like Mrs. Wiggs's husband, he wrote a good hand. But I was speaking of a wife's point of view." She felt very discursive. Conversation offered an outlet for her emotions.

Jerry slid down in the soft divan.

"Is it fair to brand a person by his worst fault and discard him?"

"How do you mean?" she asked, glad of an argument to help calm her crazy heart.

Jerry was very serious, as he could be at times. Daphne never could decide which way he was the more fascinating.

"We say a man's a thief if he stole only once, no matter how terrible the temptation. He ceases to be a man, possibly a father, a scholar and a gentleman. Everything else is discounted. We pick him up by the tag 'thief' and toss him out of our lives as 'no good.' "

Daphne, looking down from her perch on the arm of the davenport, exulted in his defense of an unknown sinner.

"I love your broad-mindedness, Jerry, but with our complicated civilization, don't we have to be

ruthless?" She talked with nervous volubility. "According to your idea, no man is a murderer. Maybe in the sight of God he's a poor, unfortunate creature who once killed. Just the same, for the good of society, don't we have to judge him by his worst act?"

"Civilization demands such a lot, Daphne!"

She nodded. His arms were crossed over his chest; was he pressing the rose-leaf to his heart? Nonsense!

"I know we've made a fetish of custom, but perhaps education will teach us to discriminate, so that instead of following the herd and being shackled by convention we'll know enough to obey those rules which will help us fit into our environment." It was an old argument, worn threadbare at college harangues, but it served to steady her. She leaned eagerly forward, extending her hands in a pleading gesture. "Isn't that the purpose of education? Teaching us to fit into our environment?"

With an abrupt swiftness he took possession of a hand, pressing it between his palms.

"Please, Daphne, please let me. How you're fitting into your environment—the soft firelight and yellow lamps!"

She submitted. The door of her heart was unlatched and Jerry was crowding in. While she encouraged him to talk about his home in Wisconsin,

her mind was blurred by the consciousness of his fingers pressed over hers. The blush that scorched her cheeks seemed to beat against her temples.

Time, their perpetual enemy, was pursuing them. Across the hall, in the parlor, the onyx clock snapped out the hour like a jealous spinster. Soon Grace and Archie would return. Already she could hear her mother, in the kitchen, preparing refreshments.

There was a long silence. Jerry's eyes, gazing at her with burning intensity, became two lodestones, until it seemed as if it were they, and not his fingers, which drew her hand slowly toward him, toward the breast pocket that held the rose-leaf. When he pressed her palm over his heart and she felt its violence, the realization that he shared her riot of emotion was both exquisite and terrifying. With a sudden, automatic jerk, she wrenched herself free.

"You mustn't, Jerry."

"Why not?"

"I . . . I don't like it!"

She saw him draw back as if she had struck him, saw him catch his under lip between his teeth. A great loneliness overwhelmed her, chilling as the recent ecstasy. She had offended him. Jerry despised her for a narrow prude. A fanatic!

An automobile throbbed noisily up the circular

drive . . . Archie and Grace! Was it too late to make up?

With a quick motion she knelt on the divan before him, her skirts foaming about her, and for an instant held his face between her hands.

"I lied, Jerry!"

Then, before he could catch her, she sprang to her feet and ran to the door.

"Here come Archie and Grace! Listen to the old Ford!"

She wanted to laugh and shout, to run a race, or climb a tree, to do a million things at once. She was intoxicated!

"Poor Reverend!" she exclaimed; "his battery's almost gone. He may have to carry the little car home. Borrow it some time, for a real thrill! He starts out to condone with the Widdy Brown, but if the steering-gear only turns left that day, he makes a congratulatory call on the Bride Smith. There! He's turned off the engine! He may never get it started!"

The screen door closed with a snap and Grace swept into the library, followed by Archibald Meeks. She was still the leading lady in the operetta. Her brows arched as she glanced from one unlighted lamp to another. But Daphne, ignoring her, held out her hand to Archie.

"Really I felt as if I shouldn't come in, but Grace insisted," apologized the young minister.



Daphne liked Archie, partly because of his long, pathetic devotion to Grace, and partly because he was a comfortable moral cushion between her college-bred doubts and her childhood beliefs; for he was a confident, well-balanced modernist.

As she introduced Jerry to her sister and Archie, she was struck by the difference there could be in blonds. The plump little minister's fair skin gave him a pasty, anemic appearance. His scanty locks were so light it scarcely mattered that he was already bald. Whereas Jerry . . . Her heart crowded into her throat as she looked at him; his cheeks glowed with sunburn and his rumpled, tawny hair attracted the eye like fire. They were as different, she thought, as a pale grape-fruit and a bright tangerine.

Their actions also were at variance. Jerry moved with quick vitality, eager to complete one thing that he might start another, impatient at the shortness of life. Archie was placid and deliberate; ahead of him was all eternity.

"You must be dying of ennui, in this dull little town, Mr. Veerland," sympathized Grace, handing her cape to Archie with a regal gesture, and sinking on the divan. She patted the cushion beside her invitingly.

"If I were to die, Miss Churchill, it would be from a cause the poets assure us has never proved

fatal," Jerry answered, accepting the designated seat.

Daphne, who was trying to listen to Archie, quoted to herself:

"Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them,—but not for love." Love! She drew an ecstatic breath. Did Jerry really love her? She smiled into the minister's round, pale face.

"Don't pull a bone about this being Grace's dress, will you, Reverend?"

"Mantle of Elijah, eh?" He winked an understanding eye.

"That's the cleverest thing a parson can do—remember whether it's Elijah or Elisha who shed his garment." And she laughed with disproportionate mirth.

"What's never proved fatal before, Mr. Veerland?" Grace insisted, dropping her jade beads through her fingers and shaking her head so that the long green ear-rings tapped her cheeks. "I'm not a college girl, you see, so I haven't the slightest idea what you mean. So stupid!" She pronounced it stoo-pid.

"She's really not so dumb as she looks, Jerry," interposed Daphne, who had seated herself on a stool before the fire, her back to every one. "She's dumber."

Grace smiled tolerantly.

"Heaven be praised vacations don't last forever! . . . Do you play tennis, Mr. Veerland?"

"I play at it," said Jerry.

When Grace tried to make a date for the next afternoon, Daphne held the fire-tongs in tense fingers. Would he give up their Eden meeting? She ought to rejoice at the idea. According to her theories, they had reached the place where they must put on the brakes. Ah, but hadn't they already passed that point?

"I can't play to-morrow, I'm afraid, Miss Churchill." How delightful was his rich deep voice! "I'm taking a rest-cure . . . had a touch of flu, and my heart . . ."

Daphne's joy crumbled like the bit of charred wood she powdered with the tongs. Had he heart trouble? Was it serious? Why hadn't he told her before? His hand hung over the arm of the divan close beside her, the blue veins stood out; how thin it looked! She longed to cuddle it to her cheek; she wanted to care for him, and guard him against unnecessary risks like getting his feet wet.

A rattle of china sounded from the dining-room: Mrs. Churchill came in trundling the tea-wagon, her shoulders bent like a tired nurse-maid's. Indeed, that was what she had been for the last twenty-odd years—a patient, uncomplaining nurse who had served her husband and two daughters with all the faithful devotion of her

repressed nature. But gratitude had no place in Daphne's heart to-night. Never had she been so conscious of her mother's awkward height and her sharp face. She wished, with cruel disloyalty, that she had almost any other kind of mother to introduce to Jerry. His had been little, and pretty, with henna hair and soulful blue eyes. Mrs. Churchill extended a bony hand in awkward acknowledgment of the introduction, and toyed with the black beads which seemed to weigh down her already burdened shoulders. Daphne wondered if any girl had a less attractive parent.

Nevertheless, Jerry's face lighted with eager pleasure and he held the thin hand in a warm grip.

"I'm awfully, tremendously glad to meet you, Mrs. Churchill. Please let me sit beside you and tell you how much I admire Daphne."

Grace, beginning to serve refreshments, gave a scornful little laugh. Daphne sank upon the footstool again. Jerry, Jerry! If he didn't mean it, he shouldn't say such things.

Mrs. Churchill hesitated, rubbing her right wrist with her left hand to scatter a rheumatic pain. She never stayed when the girls had company. "I . . . I think I'd better go."

"Not go and leave all that! It looks suspiciously like chicken salad!" Then Jerry added coaxingly: "Mrs. Churchill, I can't tell you how much I enjoy a family party like this! I don't believe I've seen

two generations together since I came East. They never seem to mix in New York."

"No, they don't," agreed Mrs. Churchill, sinking down on the low divan, her knees rearing up before her.

How sweet of Jerry! mused Daphne, turning the footstool so that she used the divan as a back and brought his knees close beside her. Was his heart bad?

Archie passed the salad, at Grace's bidding; then the coffee.

"He's well practised from communion," Daphne explained, looking up over her shoulder to Jerry.

"Daphne!" admonished her mother, balancing her plate perilously on a bony apex.

"I'm going to church Sunday, Mr. Meeks," Jerry promised. "To praise God from whom all blessings flow. That's another thing I've gotten rusty on. In New York it's only the natives that go; the erstwhile religious country boys who never used to miss prayer-meeting, don't darken a church door."

"That's a fact worth investigating," mused Archie, bringing his chair closer to Jerry. "What's the reason?"

Daphne didn't hear the discussion. She was thinking of standing next to Jerry Sunday and hearing him sing, "Praise God from whom all

blessings flow!" A little thrill of ecstasy ran through her. Was she one of the blessings?

When Daphne and Jerry were alone—while Mrs. Churchill went for more coffee, followed by the willing but futile Archie, and Grace was in the hall re-powdering—Daphne whispered:

"Have you really a bad heart, Jerry?"

He leaned over so that his breath warmed her bare neck.

"In a way—a way that demands the afternoons in the woods with you. You'll be going tomorrow?"

"Of course." Need he ask?

Grace was returning. He straightened, but as he did so, he ran the toe of his oxford up the calf of her gray silk leg, slowly, sensuously, sliding up to the bend of her knee. It was surreptitious, sneaky, erotic. Daphne hated it.

"No, no, don't do that," she whispered sharply and fear stalked in her flaming heart. She forgot about the ministerial grandfather who preached brotherly love. She no longer remembered the little mother with henna hair. Was Jerry only enjoying the thrill of a flirtation? She thought of her father that crystal morning. Was she Jerry's Freda?

Talk clattered noisily about her. Was she letting herself care for a fascinating philanderer? Why had he spoiled everything by doing that?

Half an hour later the two men left, the little Ford rattling noisily after the dusty Paige. Grace tossed her cape over her arm, and patted a yawn.

"Isn't your lion-maned friend something of a gay bird, Daphne?"

Hearing her fears articulated, Daphne denied them:

"I shouldn't say so."

"Well, he's certainly some rusher. And he has the most flirtatious eyes I ever saw."

His eyes didn't worry Daphne. If only he had not indulged in that vulgar toe-petting.

"At any rate, Archie has no cause to be jealous," she snapped back.

"Pooh, I should hope not. Doesn't he look rather fast to you, Mother?"

Mrs. Churchill, straightening the disorder, brushed the crumbs from the divan before answering.

"I thought him very charming . . . But . . . I see what you mean, Grace . . . and I hope, Daphne dear, you won't lose your head."

"Lose her head! Impossible!" mocked Grace. "She's ruled by her head. Majoring in rational love; eh, little sister?"

"Shut up," growled Daphne, looking miserably at the bowl of red roses. But suppose Grace were right!



## Chapter VI

THE day was warm and still. Only the topmost leaves swayed indolently, and insects buzzed with boring insistence. L'Aiglon, champing his jaws, slowly wandered through the dry, papery leaves; while his mistress, carefully attired in a habit of oyster-white linen, paced back and forth in her lonely Eden.

For the first time Jerry was late! Frightfully late! She pushed back her cuff and frowned at the wrist-watch. She had been waiting an hour. In ten minutes she must leave for her grandmother's birthday party.

All night her emotions had seesawed. . . . Up, up into a heaven of ecstasy! Jerry loved her, his love was an excuse for his act. . . . Then down, down into the cold pool of doubt. Grace was right. Jerry was a flirt! . . . Which was true?

In those long tense hours she had finally surrendered her austere philosophy and admitted that she loved him. She had come ready to hear his proposal, ready to forget all her theories about a profession first and love afterward; willing, anxious to be engaged. And Jerry had not arrived!

Was he only a flirt who, after her sharp rebuke about the leg-petting, had lost his courage? She slashed a tree-trunk with her worn crop, her lips compressed, shoulders high. Very well, then, let him stay away. But at the thought she sank upon the grass, a disconsolate little figure, her arms hugging her knees, her head bowed, last night's curls falling in soft rings. She didn't want to do without Jerry! Never in all her life had she been so happy as in these last wonderful days. If he had cared nothing for her, could he have gazed at her so adoringly? But where was he to-day?

Suddenly she was lifted out of her depression by a new idea. Jerry was sick! A relapse of the flu! She jumped up, ready to nurse him! She felt his head in the hollow of her arm as she fed him medicine, and her heart, leaden a minute ago, tripped madly.

Footsteps pounding the dirt path made her pause. A second later Jerry dashed through the opening, waving a slim package.

"Lordy, I'm winded!" He dropped on the grass, gasping. "Afraid I'd miss you . . . two blow-outs . . . ran all the way from Miller's Lane. Here!"

Daphne took the proffered parcel; her knees melted under her. She trembled with happiness. There was no doubting the love that shone in his

eyes. Grace was wrong! Insects buzzed the glad news. The brooks gurgled it. Grace was wrong, wrong!

"What on earth is it, Jerry? It's too long for a peppermint stick." She fumbled with the string.

"Open up and take a peep." He mopped his scarlet face. "I dashed to town for it this morning."

All the way to New York for her!

"Cut the string, Jerry; I'm so excited!"

He snapped the twine and she unrolled a tan-leather riding-crop with a gold-mounted handle. Two block initials were engraved on the oblong plate—"D. C." The C was in the middle, leaving room for a third letter. Daphne sat motionless, dizzy with suspense. Was he going to ask her to make the missing initial V?

In the long pause, her flush of excitement turned to shame. She had been mistaken.

"It's a stunner, Jerry. Just what I need . . . but . . ."

He reached over and took her hands.

"I wish I were that crop, Daphne, to be tucked under your arm, pressed close to your heart. Feel how mine is running away!"

She closed her eyes as he pressed her palm over the pearl button on his shirt pocket; the mad drumming synchronized with her whole pulsing body. "Intoxicated with emotion!" The phrase

of her rampant speeches jeered at her. Yet she did not withdraw. She was a rebel. She didn't care what she had thought or preached; Jerry's heart was pounding for her. She couldn't pull herself away . . . and even if she could, she wouldn't. She loved Jerry! She wanted him to want her!

He moved closer, slipping his arm about her, and pressed her head to his shoulder. She shook back the loose curls so that her bare forehead touched his hot cheek. He hadn't changed her theories. He had overwhelmed them.

"I'm going to teach you to love me, Daphne."

Blood pounded in her temples. Her heart had crowded into her throat, muffling her voice to a mere whisper.

"You don't have to, Jerry. I love you now."

How could she be sure this was the great love of her life? It was queer, arguing with herself. For answer, she simply turned her face up to his and their lips met.

He hugged her to him. They sat swaying slightly, vibrating with the intensity of their passion, their lips crushed in a long, hungry kiss. She was a traitor. Even while she clung tighter to him, her mind refused to be stilled. What did she know about this man? Less than two weeks ago they had met. Where was all her boasted intelligence

—a profession first, love afterward? But with closed eyes she greedily received his kisses.

“When did you know you loved me, Daphne? I think I loved you, precious, the first second I saw you on horseback, but I was positive when I saw you lying on your darling little tummy, kicking your heels toward heaven. And you, my dearest?”

His voice was soft music, his caressing lips checked her thoughts. She could only feel his heart thumping madly for her under the white sport shirt, and the realization filled her with exultation.

“I can’t talk now, Jerry,” she whispered.

“Darling! Mine forever and ever! My little wife! God! how I love you! You exquisite little girl.” He ripped open his shirt and thrust her hand through, until it rested over his warm bare breast above the riotous pounding.

The sun slipped behind the back drop of trees, leaving the lovers in the cooling shade, conscious only of each other. Without a word, he gathered her on his lap. She yanked off her stiff boots and doubling her slim black legs, cuddled in his arms. She had lost the fight, but she was an ecstatic hostage.

“Daphne, darling, what is the first possible second we can be married?”

She made no answer. The present filled her mind and heart and soul. She was within the warmth of his arms. Her lips pressed his chin. She loved the feel of the prickly invisible beard, the smell of sunburn. The moment was all-consuming.

"Daphne . . . to-day! Will you marry me to-day?" Jerry's voice quivered with excitement. He held her from him, so he could look into her face. "Daphne, will you?"

"Elope, Jerry, as if we were ashamed of our love?"

"No," he agreed, relaxing, "I suppose you're right. But what's the earliest possible date?"

"Remember, I have three years—"

"My God, Daphne! don't talk like that!" Then, as he felt her draw away, he went on hurriedly. "I don't mean you to give up your ambition, darling; but I've planned it all so that you can go on with your work just the same—take your last year at Barnard and get your LL.B. at the Brooklyn Law School. How does that sound?"

"Jerry dear, I can't listen. I know we're engaged, darling, and that's as much as I can assimilate just now."

"But don't you want me, darling, as much as I want you?" he pleaded.

"Of course I do, but I want you to hold me tight again."

He crushed her fiercely to him, and she slipped her hand back into the warm nest over his racing heart. She wished he wouldn't talk.

"I want you now, Daphne, to-day! Why can't we go off in the car this minute? You're always talking against herd conventions."

His boyish impatience was sweet, but she remained firm.

"We can't, dear, because . . . well, it wouldn't be fair to Mother. When a girl elopes it's always a reflection on her mother."

"You don't love me as I do you, or you wouldn't be thinking of any one else. You have no slightest idea what you mean to me, precious. Since that first day you've never been out of my mind for one single second. I breathe your name to myself when I'm alone, 'Daphne . . . Daphne.' Darling, you want me, too—don't you?"

"You know I do, Jerry." She burrowed her lips into his cheek. "But we can't be ruthless, dear. I'll agree to all your plans about Barnard and the law course, and . . . Jerry, I'll marry you the tenth of September."

"How many weeks is that?" She felt him count them on his fingers, pressing them into her shoulder in rotation. "Seven! . . . And your mother, darling . . . will she agree?"

"Mother's the easiest person in the world to



manage. Anyway, that's my birthday. I'll be twenty-one."

"You darling! We'll tell her to-night and buy your ring on Monday. Seven weeks . . . forty-nine days . . . an age!"

"Very deliberate, I'm sure!" she laughed. The laugh turned abruptly into silent awe. Married to Jerry! Belonging to him for all time! Her husband! Her arms tightened about his neck.

"Oh Jerry!"

Suddenly she remembered the party she was to attend. She sat up, palpitating and dazed.

"Grandma's birthday!"

She tried to see her watch, but her eyes would not focus.

"Quick, Jerry, what time is it? I'm due there at four. Mr. Bruce is coming and I mustn't gum the works."

"Twenty after. But you can't go, darling!"

"Have to, Jerry." She slid off his lap and began pulling on her black boots. He picked up the new crop she had left in the grass, and studied the band with the two initials. His face had become set, his mouth grim.

"You noticed, dearest, that I left a blank space for your third initial?"

She shot him a radiant smile and nodded vigorously. Then, seeing his worried frown, asked:

"What's the matter, Jerry?"

"Matter? Nothing's the matter." He rose and stood with his back toward her, grinding a heel into the earth.

"But there is something wrong, Jerry. Tell me." Her heart stopped beating, in sudden apprehension.

"It's just that I vowed to myself, dear, I'd never ask you to take my name until I told you . . . something."

Her foot slid into the boot with a squeak, and she sprang to her feet.

"Jerry! Not something . . . something that would hurt my love for you?" she pleaded.

"Could anything do that, Daphne? Nothing in heaven or earth could touch my love for you."

She felt cold all over, a creeping shiver ran up her legs.

"I love you, Jerry; at this moment I think I love you with every fiber of my being, but if I can't honor you, as well as love you, I shall never marry you." The words came out automatically, as if she were still haranguing at college. She didn't believe she would have to live up to them; the very idea was inconceivable. "It isn't . . . it isn't that, Jerry?"

"Dear God, no!"

He walked a few paces up the bank of the brook, his fists in his patch pockets, the riding-crop emerging like a fishing-line. As he retraced

his steps, the harassed look gave place to the gleaming light of adoration.

"What I'm going to tell you hasn't anything to do with me directly. My father, Daphne, defrauded a bank and died in prison. You ought to know."

"Your father! Oh Jerry, Jerry darling!" She flung herself upon him and clasped her arms about his neck, hysterical with relief. "What do fathers count, you blessed? If you had known my father. . . !"

"You precious, precious!" he breathed fiercely. "I'll never give you up; never, never! I'll be whatever you want me, darling! If only Mother were alive, how she would love you!"

Daphne was ashamed of her secret joy that she would never have to share Jerry even with the mother he adored. What a selfish beast she was becoming!

"Jerry, I love you *too* much. Let me go now. I must."

With a final embrace he released her, and side by side they made their way out of the secret nook, their eyes full of mystery as if they had seen a vision, as indeed they had.

"Until eight o'clock, love. If your mother doesn't consent to our marriage?"

"She will, dear; she's never crossed me in anything."

## A Dinner of Herbs 81

"There'll be a moon, darling. Shall we ride?"

She nodded; alone with Jerry in the moonlight!  
Sweet ecstasy!

He took her suddenly by the shoulders and spoke with vibrant feeling.

"Always remember, Daphne, with love like ours nothing else really matters."

## Chapter VII

GRANDMA CHURCHILL sat entertaining her daughter-in-law and godchild in the cheery kitchen of the little house she had helped her husband build over half a century before. During a conversational pause she reached for her knitting, on the three-legged table beside her, but, remembering her daughter's instructions, subdued the temptation and gently agitated the stationary rocker, which creaked pleasantly.

"I wonder what's keeping Daphne," murmured "young" Mrs. Churchill, peering through the frilled sash curtains.

"Look out for the oxalis," snapped Hetty, her sister-in-law, as if a glance might blight the trailing vine. "I wish they would come; the ice-cream'll be mush." She emphasized each word with a vicious nod, like a sharp little woodpecker. Although she accomplished all tasks with perfection, her ill-temper was ruinous. The exquisite garden was disfigured by an ugly fence; the immaculate house meant endless backaches; her brother Robert was a nuisance when he tried to help her, and utterly selfish when he did not. The world was an abominable place despite all she did to

improve it, and her only pleasure was imparting little grievances to her neighbors in exchange for local gossip.

"Tain't like Daphne to be late," said Grandma. "You ain't seen her for two years, have you, Little Glen?"

"Little Glen," whose large proportions completely hid the ladder-back chair, so that he seemed mystically supported, shook a denial.

"I always think of her climbing down the library ladder, head first."

Grandma chuckled and her black satin stomach quivered, the jet trimming sending out sparkles of light.

"She don't have a notion she's most growed up. I was a mother before I was her age. . . . How old's your little daughter?"

The lawyer's face brightened. He had been a widower over a year and his child was his ruling passion.

"Peggy's two."

"Such a cute age," murmured young Mrs. Churchill, politely, her eyes on the state road. Grace was always late, but Daphne prided herself on a businesslike punctuality . . . horseback riding was a dangerous sport. . . . Then her listening ears heard the reassuring beat of hoofs and with a sigh of relief she centered her attention on the party.

A minute later the back door was flung open and Daphne dashed into the room, clinging to the door-knob as if she had entered the cabin of a careening ship. She shook her blazing cheeks free from curls and waved the new crop.

"Hello, everybody! greetings!"

Riding through the woods, she had bitterly resented the necessity of leaving Jerry, and for the first time she rebelled against this family custom which her father had originated years before. But now that she was here, she found that her love added a new luster to the occasion. It was the cutest thing imaginable, this celebration of Grandma's seventy-sixth birthday. When she was that age, Jerry would be eighty-four . . . not impossible!

She crossed the room with a buoyant swing, and kissed her grandmother's downy cheek, nodded to her mother, and held out her hand to Glen Bruce.

"Awfully jolly, you're staying the week-end." Some people might think him handsomer than Jerry, but it was personality that counted. . . . How thick his hand felt! She noticed the sharp creases in the blue-serge trousers and her heart floated back to the woods. If Jerry's had been pressed like that, what a wreck she would have made of them! Once more she was being strained against that drumming heart!



"I made a grave mistake, offering you a clerkship, Miss Daphne." Glen Bruce was scrutinizing her, in his calm legal way.

She forced herself back into the cheery kitchen.

"Why's that, Mr. Bruce?"

"You will be appropriating all my male clients."

Her laughter was gay. Did he really think her attractive? She hoped so: it made her more worthy of Jerry. Would they really be married the tenth of September? Married! How thrilling to talk nonsense to Glen Bruce, while she secretly planned her wedding!

"I didn't know you were such a jollier, Mr. Bruce. Another example of that old riddle, 'What does a lawyer do when he's dead?' Answer: 'Lies still!'" She joined in the laugh that followed, proud of her ability to mask her ecstasy.

Aunt Hetty came up from the cellar, where she was guarding the home-frozen ice-cream, as a wine-bibber treasures his ancient Bordeaux.

"Oh, you're here, Daphne. You're late!"

Hot blood scorched Daphne's veins as she remembered the cause, but she answered nonchalantly:

"Anyway, Grace is later."

"If Robert ever gets dressed, I wish he'd crack some more ice. Cream'll be nothing but slush."

Uncle Robert clumped heavily into the room

at this moment, very dressy in a stiff-bosomed shirt.

"Well, here I am. More ice, is it?"

"We can wait a few minutes longer. Don't get in my way." Hetty spread majolica plates on a newspaper. "I suppose Grace is coming sometime."

Conversation sagged. Uncle Robert drew up a chair and studied his swaying foot through thick glasses. He had exhausted his list of subjects, riding up from the station with the big city lawyer. Daphne, in the little bent-wood rocker that had been her father's, became reingulfed in emotions, her mother smiled vacantly, showing a willingness to be entertained, and it was Bruce who finally filled in the breach.

"I was a witness at a queer wedding last week. It was a ceremony in honor of their grandson."

"Grandson!" snapped Aunt Hetty, popping out of the closet. "*Grandson* did you say?"

Bruce nodded.

"They'd been living together for twenty-five years without ever marrying."

"They lived together and had children!" Young Mrs. Churchill shook her narrow head in remonstrance.

"What was the reason?" demanded Grandma, practically.

"I don't see as there is any reason as should

make people play fast and loose with marriage," sniffed Hetty.

"I believe you're right . . . in this case at least," Bruce agreed. "Their theory was absurd. She wouldn't marry him on account of some wild escapade; she must have been a rampant radical in the gay nineties, but she says she is justified, for he's been an irreproachable husband—"

"Husband!" hissed Hetty.

"He was a common-law husband, of course. In any case, they're duly married now."

"All new-fangled notions didn't start with you, after all, Daffy," laughed Uncle Robert, looking lovingly at his niece.

"But they'll never be able to celebrate their golden wedding," she mourned. If she and Jerry were married fifty years, even death couldn't separate them very long.

"I must say she don't deserve any happiness," protested Hetty. "What a woman—"

A maroon coupé turned up the drive, sending a glittering reflection into the room and interrupting Hetty's vituperations.

"Here comes the queen," announced Uncle Robert.

"Grace!" exclaimed Aunt Hetty. She was irrationally proud of this luxurious member of the family, who possessed all the characteristics she most abhorred.

To-day Grace wore salmon pink, a soft draped dress, and a pink Milan picture hat drooping over her left eye with a burden of pink hydrangeas. Following her, pale but smiling, was Archie Meeks.

"Grandmother dear!" Grace's rare visits were conducted with effusion. Scented arms enveloped the soft old neck. "Happy, happy birthday! I brought the Reverend to congratulate you!" She straightened, and held out her hand to Glen Bruce, with just a shade too much indifference. "What gives us a clearer perception of the flight of time than your visits! Have you met Mr. Meeks? I can't remember."

There was half a head's difference in their height and Bruce's ruddy complexion, like Jerry's, made the minister appear more anemic than usual. Daphne, looking at them, wished she might see Glen Bruce and Jerry together. Jerry would make the big lawyer look like an overgrown school-boy.

"For Heaven's sake!—quarter of five!" exclaimed Grace, adjusting her hat in the face of the old clock. "I had no idea it was so late. A hundred apologies! When does the party begin?"

"Immediately, now you're here," rap-tapped Aunt Hetty, leading the way into the little parlor. "Don't linger, Ma, or the ice cream'll be mush."

Old Mrs. Churchill rose and lumbered after

her daughter into the damp, chilly parlor, where the presents were already heaped on the marble center table.

When the last gift had been unwrapped, Grandma, flushed with gratitude, went about, kissing each donor. Reaching Glen, who shared the melodeon bench with Daphne, she tweaked his ear.

"You extravagant rascal!—buying an old woman lovely what-you-may-call-'ems!"

"Lorgnettes, Grandmother," supplemented Grace.

"Lorgnettes. I'm going to wear 'em at the girls' weddings. And that black-silk apron, Daphne, is—"

Daphne did not hear what it was.

"The girls' weddings"! Her wedding! She looked across the room at her mother, who was helping Aunt Hetty fold the white-tissue wrappings. Last night her mother had said she hoped Daphne would not lose her head. What would she think when she learned to-night that she had lost her heart and was to be married the tenth of September? Grace, of course, would make a terrific fuss, but that didn't matter. As Jerry said, nothing really mattered but their love.

Aunt Hetty, refusing all help, rushed back and forth from the kitchen, serving the ice-cream, pausing now and then to press her forehead.

The birthday cake was a great white confection, brilliant with seventy-six tapers that intensified even the daylight. Hetty set it on the end of the table, ruthlessly pushing the gifts to one side.

"Here, Ma, you cut it. Better blow the candles right out before the grease ruins everything."

When the ordeal of refreshments was over and Hetty was collecting the blue majolica dishes, Grace turned to the minister, who sat on the tête-à-tête beside her:

"Well, of all stupid people! What'll we do, Archie?—shriek the news from the pulpit?"

"Looks like we'll have to."

"Grace, you're not . . ." Daphne jumped up from the bench and made a dive for her sister's left hand. A diamond solitaire, that represented too large a proportion of Archie's annual income, glittered on her third finger. The younger sister flung herself on the betrothed. Grace was suddenly very dear. Her own happiness took voluble expression. "Oh Grace, isn't it wonderful! I'm tickled to death! What do you want for an engagement present? When are you going to be married?"

"Oh, not for ages. Not until Archie gets . . ."

By this time the others understood the cause of the emotion and Grace was surrounded. Daphne turned to the neglected Archie, who had moved away to make room for the relatives.

"You're a dear old brother-in-law, and next to having the moral law writ in the heart is to have a minister in the family. I'm just tickled to death."

"So am I," he agreed, his mouth twitching with emotion.

Daphne suddenly wanted to burst into tears; it was all so beautiful and she was exceedingly lonely. She wanted Jerry here beside her; she wanted the family to know they were engaged, and receive congratulations like Grace and Archie. Grandma would love him instantly. Aunt Hetty never would . . . and that was nothing against Jerry! Uncle Robert only needed time. To-night, when her mother had been told, they might drive down here and spread the good news further. What a thrilling day in the Churchill family!

Her mother sank into her chair, stunned by the news she had expected for months. Grandma bustled into the kitchen and returned with her knitting, setting her needles into immediate action.

"I'm going to make you each half a dozen face-cloths."

"I suppose you'll be wanting to take our minister to a more stylish parish," objected Aunt Hetty, pausing with the remains of the birthday cake.

"Of course I will!" agreed Grace. "I'm count-



ing on Mr. Bruce's influence to get Archie an assistant-pastorship in Brooklyn."

"Grace, please!" protested the embarrassed minister.

"Tut, tut, Archie! what's the use of a wife if she isn't a helpmate? All Mr. Bruce's clients are church pillars."

Glen Bruce smiled at Archie.

"I'm going to church to-morrow. Give me your best."

"You'll have a grand congregation, Archie. Jerry Veerland said he was going, too. Remember?" Daphne smiled ecstatically. When Jerry sang the Doxology he would be praising God because of her.

"Jerry Veerland . . . Is he the man that's staying at the hotel?" snapped Aunt Hetty, straightening a linen chair cover.

"Yes. He's Daphne's first beau," volunteered Grace.

"Huh! I hope not! He needs more'n church, he does."

Daphne sat motionless, her white-linen shoulders held high.

"What do you know about him?" Grace asked eagerly.

"Tain't necessary to go into all that now, is it?" soothed Grandma.

"If he's trying to fool around with Daphne, I

should think it was, decidedly," pecked the small bird.

"Don't you worry about Daffy. She can look out for herself," interposed Uncle Robert.

"I said last night he was a Don Juan!" Grace proclaimed with a ring of triumph. "Out with it, Aunt Hetty; half a secret is worse than the whole."

"Pooh, it's no secret. It was in all the papers last winter. He ran away with his employer's wife—took her to Atlantic City and was correspondent in the divorce. He's one of those smart city Alecs."

Mrs. Churchill gave a little gasping sigh and rubbed her wrist rapidly.

"I'm so sorry," she murmured. "He was quite fascinating."

"His kind always is," scoffed Grace, turning her engagement ring in a ray of sunlight so that it scattered a shower of rainbows on her salmon silk skirt. "I should think, Daphne, with all your intellectual theories on love, you'd have seen he wasn't any good."

There was a tense silence. It needed but a glance at Daphne to know something of what she was suffering. She leaned against the little oak organ, her shoulders bowed, her chin sunk on the scarlet tie. Her face was the color of the linen habit; she stared at the red ingrain carpet.

"I won't believe it," she said doggedly, without moving.

Mrs. Churchill looked appealingly from Archie to Bruce. But it was Uncle Robert who first assayed to comfort her.

"You wouldn't let yourself be upset by a lion-maned chap like him, Daffy! Why, you're twice as smart as what he is."

A rose in the carpet caught her eye. Jerry pocketing the petal! Jerry everywhere. He saturated every thought! No, no, she wouldn't believe it! She had asked him if there were any reason why she could not marry him and he had said, "Dear God, no."

"That's a lot of cheap gossip without a word of truth in it," she asserted, throwing back her head.

"It's true, all right," Bruce said quietly. "I remember the case. She was married again the other day. . . . You haven't known him very long, Miss Daphne?"

"Oh no; he's only been in town a few days," her mother hastened to explain.

A few days! Did they think love was controlled like a stop-watch? What was time, anyway? A minute in Jerry's arms was an eternity of bliss. Then Daphne remembered what she must believe: Jerry's arms had embraced another woman. In the stillness of the night he had breathed his love and

this other woman had given herself in passionate abandon until he had been satiated. Daphne ought to be glad she had learned the truth. Suppose she had eloped with him! But her heart, in defiance of her head, leaped at the idea. She must get away from all these people and think; drill her heart in the lesson it must learn. Did life always trip people up like this, to test their theories?

She rose abruptly.

"I'm going. Good-by." And ignoring the confusion of protests, she strode hurriedly through the kitchen.

"It's better that you should know, isn't it, Daphne dear?" coaxed her mother, following her and standing at the opened door.

The girl nodded dumbly.

Glen Bruce also joined her.

"There's something I want to say, Miss Daphne. Mightn't we walk up the hill?"

They went out together, she leading L'Aiglon.

"I just wanted you to know, Miss Daphne, I'm serious about starting you in law. It's an absorbing profession."

Daphne kicked a pebble with the toe of her riding-boot.

"I don't think it would have been quite so bad if he had married her after the divorce, do you, Mr. Bruce? At least, that would have had the excuse of a grand passion." There was no one

else on earth she could have asked that question.

"I'm afraid it was pretty sordid," he agreed. "Your uncle is right, isn't he, Miss Daphne? You can look out for yourself?"

"Yes," she answered defiantly, staring at the black oiled road: how different from the cocoa-colored wood-path! "Thank you, Mr. Bruce, I'm going to take advantage of your offer. Now, if you don't mind, I think I'll ride a bit. If I'm late to dinner, tell Mother not to wait. I shan't want anything."

## Chapter VIII

"WITH love like ours, nothing else matters!" Jerry's statement jeered at Daphne as she rode home through the gathering twilight. . . . Nothing mattered. . . . Did he suppose she would go on loving a seducer who had lied and deceived her? No wonder he wanted to elope!

It was sardonic that she should have engaged herself to a man like him. Majoring in intellectual love! For once Grace was right. . . . Grace . . . was she mad with happiness at the thought of marrying Archie? How could she be? The Reverend was so mild and ineffectual. His kisses could never be like Jerry's! Eyes closed, Daphne's whole body pulsated to the memory of his embrace: then, with a sharp cut of the new crop, she shook off the passionate thought. It was not love but merely a sex appeal. She was through with emotions; her girlhood theory was right. The best chance for happiness was through the head and not the heart. She was going to cut Jerry out of her life with ruthless intelligence, and devote all her energies to her profession.

Her mother was waiting for her on the steps,

with the same worried expression she used to have at train-time. Daphne flung herself off L'Aiglon. She needed but one look at her mother to realize that she was through with Jerry, irrevocably.

The comfortable porch was gay with wide-striped cretonnes and illuminated by numerous lamps. A brilliant straw parrot clung to a perch, a canary slept in his cage. Long-fronded ferns and quantities of flowers added their charm. As Daphne hurried in, a glimpse of the Gloucester swing laden with bright pillows stabbed her heart. There was where she and Jerry would have sat after their moonlight ride!

Grace called to her from the green-willow table, where she was playing cards with Archie and Glen.

"Don't go in, Daffy; make a fourth. Archie's given a pre-nuptial promise to learn bridge and Mr. Bruce is helping in the struggle. It's killing! He calls the ace 'one' and clubs 'clovers'!"

"Thanks, no. I'm beastly tired."

Mrs. Churchill followed her into the hall, unable to leave her alone.

"You'll let me bring you some dinner, dear."

"Nothing. The party was all I wanted." Daphne started upstairs and tried to sound casual as she added; "If Jerry happens to call, tell him I have a headache. No, just tell him I don't care to see him. Tell him I *know*."



Mrs. Churchill nodded, and rubbed her wrist.

"Isn't there something, *anything* I can do for you, dear?"

Daphne, looking at her over the banisters, thought how much more she had done than ever she dreamed. But she answered as gently as possible:

"Please leave me alone, Mother. That's all."

Jerry was due in six minutes. Pacing back and forth, from the door to the bay-window, she slashed the bed and the leather chair with her crop, while she waited for his car on the drive.

It still lacked three minutes of the hour when his horn sounded, long and loud on the first note, staccato on the next two—the call that last night sent her scurrying to the door, her heart leaping, curls bobbing. Now she stood motionless in the middle of the room, hands clenched about the crop, breath suspended.

An automobile door banged. Jerry was springing up the steps! Her mother would meet him and take him into the hall, careful not to hurt his feelings before the others. Irrational hope flooded Daphne's heart. Suppose the scandal had been false, and he was dashing upstairs to prove his innocence! She ran to the door and pressed her ear to the crack, listening, longing for the sound of footsteps.

A noise like the closing of her father's casket

lid—the automobile door again! Jerry was denying nothing! He had taken his dismissal and was going. She flung the crop on the bed and flew to the bay-window in time to see the dusty gray sedan turn down the road; she could make out a hand at the wheel . . . Jerry's hand. . . . Then he was gone out of her life forever!

Pressing her arm against her mouth, she stifled a sob, and slowly made her way to the narrow bed, her shoulders drooping beneath the draggled linen suit. She lay face downward over the leather crop, her whole body shaking with sobs.

Later, her paroxysm of tears turned into bitterness, and, rising, she undressed in the dark, ashamed of her lack of self-control. The love she craved from Jerry he had already squandered. Those long artistic hands had caressed another man's wife, his lips had been hot with passion before. This love, new to her, was but a repetition to him.

"Daphne," her mother whispered at the locked door, but she pretended sleep. Never would she love with her mother's cowed submission. Jerry had said nothing mattered but their love. And his was soiled, shop-worn! Oh, the world was horrible! Life was a cheat. Glen Bruce was right. A profession could mean a lot. Certainly more than a love like this! She would cling to her profession.

The windows had turned from black to witch-gray before she finally fell asleep. It was ten when she awoke. The first thing she saw was a note that had been pushed under her door. She knew instantly it was from Jerry, and when she read it, she realized her night of torment had settled nothing.

MY DARLING:

I must see you. When? I shall wait in our Eden all day if necessary, for I will never believe you have given me up until I hear it from your own dear lips.

Life is so short. Won't you please come soon?

Your

JERRY.

"Your Jerry," as if he were hers whether she was his or not! "Your Jerry"! She pressed her eyes with her hands. It was going to be frightful telling him face to face that she did not love him. His image rose before her. His lean, supple body, his eager face that bent toward her, intent eyes drinking her in, tawny hair tumbled, red lips imprisoned by white teeth to keep them from kissing. Ah, but they hadn't prevented him from kissing the other woman! That was what she must remember in the coming struggle of mind over heart!

She sat in the big over-stuffed chair. The leather struck cold through her thin nightgown.

Jerry was waiting for her in the woods and she would have to look into his blue eyes, false eyes, and tell him that she did not love him! She shivered.

There was a knock on her door, her mother's voice. Daphne turned the key and opened the door a few inches.

"I didn't want to go to church, dear, until I knew you were all right. Shall I have your breakfast sent up?"

Breakfast? She had forgotten it was morning. No one must know what she was suffering.

"I'm fine as a fiddle, Mother. I'll be down in a jiffy. Ask Michael to saddle L'Aiglon, will you please?"

Mrs. Churchill nodded.

"You . . . you got Jerry's note and haven't changed your mind since last night, dear?"

"No," she answered defiantly.

"I'm very thankful, my dear. There was something about him I didn't just . . . trust."

Daphne wished her mother had not expressed her prejudice. It filled her with an urge to champion him.

Half an hour later she leapt off L'Aiglon at the beginning of the wood-path, and tying him to a sapling, resolutely entered the graveyard. Girls had strolled along the straight, ugly paths with their lovers, women had trudged blinded by sor-

row, but Daphne marched defiantly, the blue gravel crunching noisily beneath her boots. She had come to gather hate.

The mausoleum stood in the midst of a velvety green plot, marked off by low marble posts, with swinging bronze chains. A marble bench ornamented the narrow path and in a niche on each side of the bronze door a high-shouldered bronze vase filled with peach-colored dahlias expressed the widow's unflagging devotion.

Daphne's face clouded with scorn as she sat on the hard bench and thought of the man lying within. She substituted Jerry for her father and imagined him caressing a Swedish waitress. Her teeth locked, her hands curled into tight fists. She would fight against such a future with all her will.

Two bees passed her, clinging to each other, dipping, swirling in the ecstasy of their passion. Daphne watched them, nostrils distended. Nature should not capture her like that. She rose erect, chest high. She was ready.

Into the cool woods. The sun filtered through the leaves in a delicate design, and a sweet Sunday stillness prevailed. At a fork in the road, half a mile from the trysting-place, L'Aiglon reared and came to a sudden halt, his fore feet scooping up the cocoa-colored path.

"Jerry!" panted Daphne, unprepared for his sudden appearance.

"I couldn't sit still, darling. Get off and walk with me, won't you, please?"

She looked down at him and held her breath. His arms were extended. She had only to drop into them and after that . . . Her mind no longer registered thought but merely desires and negations. More than anything else in the world she wanted to close her eyes and obey. She could feel him holding her to him as he had yesterday—tight, oh so deliciously tight! As if he could never love her enough. She mustn't do it! Back somewhere in her mind she had an irrevocable reason. She shook her head and jerked the reins.

"I'd rather ride, thanks." L'Aiglon raised his elegant black oiled hoof obediently, and walked with slow stateliness.

Jerry strode beside her, his hands in his trousers pockets, his head bowed. Eyes fixed on his rumpled cinnamon hair, rising and falling in even scallops, Daphne yearned to press a kiss on the curly mass, she felt herself bending toward him in the saddle; while within her came the order: "Run away now, before you're lost." But there was no victory in a forced retreat. Jerry had been right in his letter. She would have to tell him. . . . Tell him what? That she didn't love him? How could she say that when every drop of blood in her veins, every fiber of her body, each nerve cried out for him? She was not going

to give in to that love. There was the difference. If she only had a few minutes to pull herself together . . .

"What does a man say to the girl who means more to him than life or death or all eternity, Daphne, when he's wrong and she's right?"

"I'm sure I don't know," she answered, surprised at her own coldness. Now was her opportunity. "I only know that everything is over between us. You wanted me to tell you to your face. I don't love you."

She was amazed at the ease of her victory. She had expected a terrific struggle and this hadn't even been dramatic.

He looked up at her, shaking his head slowly, his blue eyes drinking her in.

"Despite everything you've heard about me, I swear, on my life, you're the only girl I've ever really loved. Can't you tell, by the self-control I've shown, that this is more than a passing attraction?" He squeezed his fingers about her calf boot. "Each day that we have been here together in Eden, I've ached to embrace you. I couldn't sleep nights, thinking about you; I've been miserable with yearning, even while I was radiant with hope. Oh Daphne! haven't I shown you that my love is sincere?"

She shook her head, increasing L'Aiglon's gait, then checking him.



"It's too late. You knew exactly how I felt and you lied to me yesterday when you said there was no reason why we could not marry."

"No more than you did just now, Daphne, when you said you didn't love me. Sweet little innocent, don't you know thousands of faithful husbands have had their little affair before they married?"

Love's hazy light was gone, leaving the gray eyes hard and cold. She saw her father mauling a plump servant, hugging a trained nurse, being towed down the hall of the Biltmore by a little blonde while her mother silently brushed away the tears that webbed her lashes. No, however much she suffered in tearing away from Jerry now, it would be less painful than a whole life of anguish.

L'Aiglon stopped near the coppice that inclosed Eden. Jerry held on to the saddle and looked up pleadingly.

"Let me tell you how it happened, darling. I'm not trying to crawl and God knows I'm ashamed . . . But Daphne, she was older than I, and quite beautiful . . . my employer's wife. She had the advantage in every way. I was a credulous fool and believed she was sincere. But when I offered to marry her—"

"Offered to marry her?" Daphne repeated, her tone softening for the first time.

"Yes, fatuous ass that I was! She laughed at me, Daphne. I'd been played for a sucker to pro-

vide her with freedom. God pity her new husband!"

Daphne ran her fingers through L'Aiglon's coarse brown mane. Jerry used as a tool . . . but he should never have consented! She shook her head. As Aunt Hetty had said, there could be no reason.

"If I'd only known you first, my darling! That's the real tragedy! Won't you come into Eden while I make you believe the truth?"

She knew that she was safer on horseback, away from his slender hands and pounding heart. Looking down, her eyes were riveted on the pearl button that held the flap of his shirt pocket. How it vibrated! She ached to feel the throb. Her own heart, so cold a minute before, choked her with its palpitation. She closed her eyes and swayed dizzily. His body was a magnet. Impulsively she swung from the saddle and dropped beside him. With a little sob she was in his arms. Their lips met. She drank in his breath greedily, insatiably. She hugged him to her savagely, her lips pressed too tight for kissing. She hadn't capitulated. In a moment she was going to tear herself away. This last ecstasy was her swan-song. Her whole body relaxed against his, save her arms which bound him to her like girdles of iron.

"This is good-by, Jerry," she whispered, drawing back her face and looking up at him.

"Daphne darling, my precious. I'll never let you go." He pushed back her long bang and pressed a kiss on her forehead. "You're going to marry me and make me what I ought to be. I believe in my heart, love, I'm more puritanical than you. If you knew how I loathe myself, you'd be willing to trust me."

"No, Jerry!" she cried out in protest. "This has got to be the end." Still she did not release him, but stood trembling under his touch.

"It can't be, my Daphne. Fate, destiny, God . . . I don't know what . . . made us for each other. You're going to marry me and give me a new beginning. Marry me, Daphne! Think of it! The very word makes my heart burst." His exquisite voice was vibrant. "Think of it, Daphne . . . our little home! Just you and I within our four walls and all the world shut out! Our little home and garden! Our furniture! A table we eat from! Chairs we sit on! A bed we sleep in!"

His breath on her cheeks was intoxicating. The world reeled about her. Why did she stay and listen to him? Every minute made the separation harder. With one arm about his neck, she tried to push herself away.

"Stop, Jerry. I don't care what you say. I know too much."

But he went on as if she hadn't spoken, his tender voice full of passion.

"We'll go off on little bats, darling, hunt up odd restaurants, drive off to nowhere in the car, or sit at home by our own fire. It's all the same, precious; whatever we do will be exquisite because we'll do it together!" When she made no answer, he pleaded: "To be always together! Doesn't that thrill you, Daphne?"

She stared at the shoulder of his rough tweed jacket. Blue and red threads woven through the brown . . . The blue were his virtues, the red his vices. Could she rip out the red? She raised her eyes to his, her lips quivered.

"Yes, Jerry, if I believed that you would always love me this way, but I don't. Once we were married and the matter settled, I should live in terror of every other woman."

For answer he covered her face with kisses, murmuring:

"My sweet Daphne, my Daffodowndilly, my love. Don't you know I'll never look at another woman? I'll never want to, sweetheart. You wouldn't ruin both our lives for one mistake?"

She looked at a tree forked at the base, making a tall V towering toward heaven . . . the V that was to have been engraved on her riding-crop.

"Jerry, was that your *one* mistake?"

Silence.

She pressed her hands against his chest to free

herself. So she had been only one of a long line! Yesterday there had been some one else, to-morrow would belong to her successor.

"Let me go, Jerry, let me go!"

"I could have lied to you, Daphne," he pleaded. "Doesn't that count for something, when I know that everything is at stake?"

She shook her head frantically, her hair lashing her cheeks.

"Let me go."

"Be reasonable, darling. I'm no different from thousands and thousands of men. There was just one other girl, years ago. I was a susceptible country boy and she was a dancer, a courtesan, Daphne. I paid her, and that was that. It was just after Mother died. Queer way to show my grief, but I was terribly lonely."

She shook her head, and would have spoken, but he went on:

"I swear, darling, my feeling for you is absolutely different. I went after those two women as I used to chase butterflies when I was a kid. I knew I wouldn't want them when I had them; they understood it that way, too. But I can't think of life without you, Daphne! Heaven would be hell if you weren't there. Oh Daphne! won't you believe me when I say you're the true love of my life?"

"These other women, Jerry, these butterflies—

were they pretty?" She was thinking of her reflection in the brook.

"Yes," he answered tersely.

She nodded with anguished understanding.

"You have a pagan love of beauty, Jerry. There will always be a lovely woman to lure you."

"But that's over with now, Daphne. Don't you see I had those two affairs between the time I lost Mother and found you, when my love had no abiding-place? Now I'll give it all to you, and there won't be any left over for silly butterflies."

For a moment she studied the leather button on his jacket. Was there any truth in his assertion? Then she remembered her father and the lesson he had taught her.

"No, Jerry," she answered defiantly, her head thrown back, her words crisp. "I want what every one desires . . . happiness; and I haven't any reason to believe that you will give it to me. So I'm going to uproot my love as I would a weed. All this sounds heartless and cold. It is! But Mother was unselfish . . . and sentimental . . . and wretched. I won't live her life. This is good-by, Jerry."

He would have held her, but she eluded him and sprang upon L'Aiglon; with a cut of the whip she raced the pony through the wood-path. Every now and then his hoofs clattered noisily on a stone, breaking the Sunday stillness. She was vic-

torious! She had torn Jerry out of her life as a weaker girl would not have done. She drank in the soft, shadowy air, elated at her power. Happiness was a matter of intelligence! L'Aiglon, responding to her heels, ran faster and faster, until the tree trunks melted into a solid barricade, but the end of the leafy tunnel gleamed brightly. She was headed for the sunshine!



## Chapter IX

DAPHNE had completed her plans before she reached home. She must get out of Bramton; she couldn't risk another meeting in the woods like this. Brooklyn was the logical place. She would go to Mrs. Borah's and get Kitty's help to find a summer job. While the family were at church, she called up on long distance and engaged board, determined to carry out her program irrespective of her mother's objections.

Mrs. Churchill, however, listened to her truculent announcement with a nod of approval and bustled about, in crackly black taffeta, packing Daphne's clothes, facilitating the departure in every way, until Daphne felt as if she were being deported. Her mother did not even insist that she wait for dinner, but ordered Michael for the one-thirty train.

"Try it out for a few days, dear. By Wednesday I can get away and, if you'd like, we'll take a little trip to Maine . . . or Nantucket." She kissed her tenderly as Michael stowed the old straw suitcase away in the car.

Even Grace was gentle and sympathetic.

"Good-by, Daphne. I really do think you're showing a lot of intelligence." Then she spoiled it by adding, "If he comes around here, I'll tell him explicitly where he gets off."

Their solicitude irritated Daphne. Her sense of triumph was rapidly disappearing. She wasn't escaping from a monster. Suppose Jerry did have a past! So had hundreds of men. Just because she herself disapproved of the system, was no reason why the whole family should be so rabid. She sank into the tonneau and waved good-by, impatient for Michael to start.

She had forgotten all about Glen Bruce until he dashed out, bag in hand, shook a hurried good-by, and climbed in beside her.

"You're not coming, too?" she objected.

"Yes he is, Daphne. I'd feel better to know you got safely to Kitty's."

"And as your mother's lawyer, I must obey," Bruce added, while Michael closed them in.

"Do they think I'm eloping?" she asked scornfully, refusing to wave to the three on the steps.

"Certainly not. They hoped poor company was better than none."

The car swung on to the State road. Daphne's eyes were fixed on Michael's Oxford uniform, her mouth was grim, but within she was quivering at her own words. "Do they think I'm eloping?" Eloping with Jerry! If she had eloped, where

would they be now? With a fierce yearning, devoid of all reason, she wished that she had . . . she and Jerry, alone in all the world!

They waited in silence for the south-bound train; he helped her in and she stared at the blurred landscape that seemed to circle about her. Every turn of the wheel was carrying her away from Jerry. Each jerk of the train increased the distance. The clicking telegraph poles registered the growing separation.

Her pent-up emotions were becoming unendurable. She had always been able to confide in Glen Bruce and now she shifted her wistful gaze to him appealingly.

"Did you ever know a girl to try out . . . what I'm running away from . . . and have the man make good?" His answer was of no importance, for her mother had taught her an unforgettable lesson. But she must say something.

He shook his head slowly.

"A good, conscientious girl who deliberately married a man with that kind of past would be storing up for herself—how does the text go?"

"Treasures in heaven," she answered bitterly.

"Then I chose the wrong one; brimstone in hell is my meaning. Seriously, Miss Daphne, there are a score of lawyers I could name who are making large incomes piloting just such couples through the court of domestic relations. I keep out of

it as much as possible. It tries one's faith in human nature."

"I suppose so," she agreed wearily. It was tiresome hearing her own argument propounded by another.

Conversation died. Eyes closed, Daphne could imagine the telegraph poles clicking the distance. Farther and farther from Eden and Jerry! She grew tense and her hands tightened in her lap. This time yesterday he had been racing toward Miller's Woods with the riding-crop. She *must* stop thinking about him! She tried to center her mind on her grandmother's birthday party, but it was saturated with memories of him. She had been engaged . . . for less than two hours. Once more she struggled to check her thoughts with conversation.

"Tell me more about that queer case, Mr. Bruce." Her eyes brightened. "Why isn't that an exception to your rule of fire and brimstone? Wasn't he faithful for twenty-five years? Or was that only because he wasn't bound to her, and since he could have his freedom at any minute, it lost its glitter?" Her voice had grown weary: Jerry had been tied to neither of his women, yet his love had died in its freedom.

"That popular sophistry about living without chains is disproved every day," Glen answered impatiently. "But I believe this couple had a little

different, although no sounder line of argument. She said she knew if she made him custodian of her honor, as well as his own, he could never be faithless. Honor among thieves."

"At least there was something magnificent in her daring," championed Daphne, staring at the two tickets wedged in the velvet seat-back. For no reason they made her think of the couple who had lived together for a quarter of a century without any marriage vows. "Don't you suppose the woman must have loathed the false pretense?"

"You mustn't idealize that case, Miss Daphne. Our morality demands certain conventions. Marriage is the foundation of the family, and the family is the structure of civilization."

The girl shrugged.

"I don't say she was wise or virtuous; but you can't deny she was bold! She risked everything, matching her soul against him."

In her own mind, however, she even granted the woman a certain amount of wisdom. No man, she realized, could be faithless under those circumstances. And were they not essentially moral, even when they lived together without any ceremony? Marriage was not a ritual, it was the welding of two lives, heart and soul, into one. Undeniably, she had accomplished that, and, to the intelligent, the result, not the method, counted.

"No. I don't concede her anything." The big

lawyer studied Daphne, brows contracted. "By all our standards it was utterly immoral, and, according to mere custom, it was anti-social. We owe civilization our respect for the sanctity of marriage."

"That's exactly why this woman took such a desperate chance," Daphne insisted, looking up at him, her eyes heavy with misery.

"How so?"

"If she hadn't wanted him for a life mate, a real husband, she would have been duly married by a minister and divorced by a lawyer. A short-term lease! The acceptable way. She blazed a new trail, and reached a goal she never could have attained along the herd track."

"Nonsense! You wouldn't say that if you'd seen the husband. He was a frightened rabbit of a man, who would have obeyed her under any circumstances. There is no reason why they should not have been married twenty-five years ago."

Arguing more often embeds the original opinion than changes it. Daphne was firmly convinced that the dilatory bride of a few days before could have held her renegade husband in no other way. What tremendous courage it must have taken twenty-five years ago!

After a protracted silence, Glen asked:

"Would you care to do a little work in my library? The books need rearranging and some

of them require first aid. Three-fifty a day, and lunch."

"I'd love to," Daphne agreed without enthusiasm, wondering if her mother had planned that, too. Then her mind slipped back to the woman. If she could have sublimated her love in a profession, would she have taken such a desperate chance? Probably not, although human hearts hadn't changed in a quarter of a century any more than bodies. It was merely that education had taught the control of love, as well as of birth.

"Are there any women judges in New York, Mr. Bruce?"

He beamed at the question and breathed an inaudible sigh of relief.

"If there aren't, there will be. Planning to put it over me like that, Judge Churchill?"

"Yes, I think I'll hitch my wagon to a judge's bench; I'd adore the title." But there was no girlish ring to her voice and her eyes were very wistful under the close brown hat. They were passing 125th Street and the teeming population, hanging out of the tenement windows, enjoying their Sunday leisure, added to her depression. The struggles of one individual seemed so futile. But this wasn't the way to begin her fight. She wet her dry lips and straightened her shoulders; she was going to make an intellectual battle for happiness.



They stopped in New York for dinner and it was nearly five before the taxi turned into Carlton Avenue, a hot city street lined with three-story American-basement houses of dull brick interspersed with a few of brown stone.

"My birthplace," scoffed Daphne, nodding toward an empty house with a weedy courtyard. A "To Let" sign drooped listlessly from a nail, and a general air of forlornness pervaded the place. It looked as she felt.

"I'm trying to persuade your mother to sell," Bruce said, adding with a smile, "although it doesn't seem respectful to dispose of Judge Churchill's birthplace."

He carried the wicker suitcase up the Borahs' front steps and held out his hand. "To-morrow, nine sharp. Good-by, Miss Daphne. . . . And do you mind my saying that you're acting like a little heroine?"

She smiled skeptically. There was nothing heroic about running away; and again she thought of the woman who had risked everything.

Glen waved his hat and ducked into the taxi as the blistered brown door was opened by Kitty.

"Daphne, you darling! Who is he? Isn't he ravishing! Announced yet?"

"He's mother's lawyer," Daphne replied tersely and entered the hot hall, redolent of cooking.

Kitty, at twenty-two, was drab of color and

character, with a predisposition toward hero-worship, in which Daphne came first. Although Daphne had felt for years that the elder girl's admiration was of a material nature, nevertheless she sometimes derived a feeling of importance. To-day, however, when she knew herself to be the most forlorn of all living creatures, Kitty's unctuous flattery was irritating.

"You'll have to share my terribly old room, Daphne. Mother's full up just at present . . . a lot of stunning men from the Navy Yard. Here, let me take your bag. How beautifully tanned you are! Doesn't the city seem frightful? Whatever possessed you to dash into town in July? I love your hat!" She preceded Daphne into a sun-baked room on the third floor, which showed signs of recent and superficial cleaning. The red-flowered ingrain carpet, gray under the double black-walnut bed, had a bright path made by the carpet-sweeper, and the china brush-and-comb tray on the oak bureau was the recipient of all sorts of unrelated things,—pins, pennies, spools, threaded needles, elastics, pencils, and paper-clips,—result of a hurried tidying.

"Take off your dress and make yourself comfy, then tell me the why-for of everything."

Daphne longed for her cool, clean Eden, with the tall grass and the smell of the earth. Was Jerry still there, supposing she would relent and

come back to him? She didn't want to room with Kitty. She wanted to get away by herself and think. Now that she had ruthlessly cut Jerry out of her life, she might at least indulge in memories.

Tossing her coat on a chair, slipping out of her straight pongee dress, and kicking off her pumps, with a weary sigh she lay down on the wide, sagging bed. Never could she remember being so utterly tired.

"Don't bother to unpack my bag, Kitty. There's nothing in it that'll muss."

"Oh, but I'd like to. Do you still ride horseback, Daphne?"

"Some." She closed her eyes and saw the leafy tunnel leading to the secret nook.

"Ever had your picture taken in your habit? You look so stunning! I know a studio that'll provide a habit and I thought of letting them take my picture. But it seems kind of silly, don't you think so?"

"It does, rather." Daphne's tone might have discouraged a less obtuse girl.

"Does your sister dress as stunning as ever?"

Daphne poked the pillow farther under her head and opened her eyes. She might just as well give up trying to think now.

"Yes, but I guess she'll have to get over it. She's engaged to a poor country minister."

"Grace is? You don't mean it!" Kitty paused while inserting a coat-hanger in the sleeves of Daphne's blue-crêpe dress, her homely face animated with wonder. "I never dreamed she would fall for any one less than a millionaire." She hung up the dress and, coming back to the bed, sank into a rocker, tilting forward toward Daphne. "Listen, Daphne. I've got a terrible problem to settle,—something frightfully vital,—and I want you to help me. One of the men who used to live here is crazy about me. He's an ensign on the *Humphrey* and he sails the middle of September for Guantanamo. He wants me to marry him next month and go down on the Navy transport. I don't know what to do."

She ran a ruminative finger over the stripe of her silk sport skirt.

"What would you say, Daphne? Of course it's terribly hot in Cuba now, and he only makes about two thousand a year. Maybe that doesn't signify anything to you, but to me—"

"I'd say don't marry him," Daphne answered shortly.

"Because he only makes two thousand?"

"Because you don't love him."

"Oh, but I do! He's awfully kind and generous. He isn't exactly handsome, but he looks very imposing, especially in his white uniform. I'm sure I love him, only . . ."

Sure she loved him, but didn't want to marry him because Cuba was hot! Daphne's spirit groaned. She and Jerry in Cuba, sitting on the white coral beach in the moonlight! The thought was too exquisite. She sat up and flung her hair away from her hot face.

"Oh, you don't love him, Kitty! You haven't any idea what the word means, for if you loved him and knew he was good and worthy of your love, you'd never hesitate a second."

"I know you wouldn't, Daphne, but I've been poor so long I know exactly what it means. We've scrimped and saved all my life and I'm fed up on it. I can't bear to think of its going on forever and ever."

Daphne suddenly realized she and Kitty were making the same struggle, only against different enemies. Just as Kitty was fed up on poverty, so she was fed up on philandering.

"I understand, Kitty," she said with new sympathy, and added with a sudden burst of confidence, "I'm fighting for my happiness, too, against a man who's poor in morals."

"You mean he's a gay bird?"

Daphne nodded, shuddering at the expression.

"And you're afraid he's after your money?"

"No, not that," she answered impatiently. "He makes fifteen thousand a year. But I know what it means being married to that sort of man. So

I ran away from him, and that's why I'm here."

Kitty was argumentative rather than sympathetic.

"That's entirely different, Daphne. If you love him and he loves you and can afford to keep you in the station you're accustomed to, why don't you marry him and try him out? Suppose he gets fly: you can get a divorce for that. But you can't for poverty. I wouldn't hesitate a second if I were you."

"You would if you were I," Daphne answered wearily, dropping back on the pillow and covering her eyes with her arm. A trip with her mother would be far preferable to this. Were it not for her appointment with Mr. Bruce the next day, she would run away immediately.

Daphne arrived at Glen's office at nine o'clock after a sleepless night, tortured by the thought of the woman who had not run away from her love. She found him sitting alone in his opulent reception room, waiting for her.

Just before her death his wife had succeeded in replacing her father's old oak furniture with dull mahogany, somber leaded-glass electroliers, and vast leather chairs. The result was a testimonial to her taste, but Daphne rebelled as she crossed the thick velvety carpet, remembering how Glen had loved the threadbare rug and the



old-fashioned fittings. There were so few things in life one could love!

When she had taken off her hat in Miss Simpson's cubicle, partitioned from the reception room, he led her directly to the library.

"There's the ladder you used to descend head first," he laughed.

Daphne looked up and smiled at him. She felt an affection for this big tender-hearted man, much as she might have felt toward a loving, faithful governess who knew all her troubles and tried to lessen her misery. It was dear of Mr. Bruce to come into town early just for her; sweet of him to bother with her at all. She must remember to ask about his little daughter, Peggy. He always glowed with happiness when any one mentioned the child.

"My idea was, Miss Daphne, to have you rearrange the books so that I might have these lower shelves free for the current magazines. Most of these volumes are a demonstration of sentiment. They were my father-in-law's, you know, and I hate to chuck them out. Borrow anything that interests you. When you get exhausted lugging books, you might mend some of the torn pages in that set; I've used them almost to death." He pulled from his pocket a spool of glazed paper gummed on one side. "But please don't work too hard. I haven't any workmen's compensation."



"Oh, but I want to work hard." Daphne pushed the noiseless ladder and looked at the shelves of books, ceiling-high. "Only I shall probably sit on the top rung and get so enthralled reading, I shan't be worth a nickel."

"In that case, young lady, you'll pay for your own lunch."

All morning she worked with unflagging diligence, rearranging sets according to their number, dusting, moving; up and down the ladder a hundred times, coveting the weariness that would make impossible a repetition of last night.

They lunched at the St. George, and Daphne was so absorbed in a case Bruce retailed that she forgot to ask about his little Peggy.

"Law must be awfully fascinating," she mused, turning the ball of ice-cream to spoon the soft part.

"It is, tremendously." In his keen eyes shone the same light that glowed in them when people remembered to ask about his daughter.

The afternoon, however, dragged endlessly. The room grew suffocating, and Daphne, desperately tired, listlessly gummed torn pages, beside the opened window. What a silly task! It was supposed to keep her busy, so she would not think of Jerry. Wasn't it just as bad to keep lashing her mind away from memories of him? Jerry! Where was he now? In Eden? Or had he gone

back to work? Back to work! The idea snapped a new thought into her mind. He might be in one of those buildings across the river, now, at this very minute! His long slender fingers might be pushing back his coppery pompadour. She held her hand to her neck, her breath short and rapid. Would he be thinking of her, his heart crowding into his throat, or was he too deeply hurt to care?

As the hours wearily passed, her mind vacillated from Jerry to the woman who had risked everything for her lover. A hot summer haze settled on the river, as if the very clouds were too tired to stay up in the heavens, and shut off Daphne's view of the opposite shore. Were the very elements trying to separate her from Jerry? With a sigh, she returned to the torn page in the Consolidated Laws. That other woman cut her way through the fog . . . into Eden!

Glen came in at four o'clock to send her home.

"You've done two men's work already, Miss Daphne, and to-morrow's another day."

To-morrow! Another day like this; then would come another, and another! How could she endure them?

Bruce poised his hand above her shoulder, then pocketed it.

"I can't endure seeing you so miserable," he said tersely. "But I'm absolutely positive it's for

the best—ultimately. Suppose we motor down to Long Beach for dinner?"

"No, thanks, I'm delightfully tired." She smiled bravely. "Thanks a lot; you've been a peach. Later on, when I'm not so self-centered, I'll be very appreciative."

"I've been utterly selfish, Miss Daphne. Later on . . . I'll tell you about it."

## Chapter X

DAPHNE sat alone on the front stoop, her eyes closed to shut out the bright street light that swung a glaring circle of illumination. Soon the boarders, who were being treated to soda-water at the corner drug store, would return and continue their cackling banter; but if she sought relief in the stifling bedroom, Kitty would probably trail her, to elaborate on her love for Edgar; yet she had just pranced off on the arm of a subaltern.

It was only half-past nine. An interminable evening stretched ahead of her—a whole life of interminable evenings! Without Jerry she was a hollow shell, like the empty house down the block. Jerry! A quiver ran through her and she hugged her slim body. Jerry's caresses; his breath on her cheek; his lips pressed, oh! so close! For two beautiful hours she had been engaged!

Her mind rehearsed the argument she had conducted with Bruce, while her tired back felt for a comfortable spot against the vestibule door. After all, that woman had run but a small risk. Under such circumstances Jerry too would be faithful.

She wouldn't keep him waiting twenty-five years, and when they were safely married, wouldn't the end have justified the means? She sighed as she stared at the hot city street, wretched with uncertainty. What was right and what was wrong? Puritans had murdered for conscience's sake! Wasn't there something heroic about taking a hundred percent chance for one's love?

She wondered how long one would feel noble and not immoral. How did an immoral woman feel? Couldn't one suspend sensibilities, knowing that the future would make restitution? Conventional thinking was the curse of the world. It restrained all progress and kept humanity in a circular rut. If she hadn't a herd mind herself, she would take Jerry on these terms. He would *have* to be true. She felt hollow and pulsating as she thought of living with Jerry.

No one would know they were not married, and when he had proved himself, they would bend to their old-fashioned consciences and have a secret wedding. Every one had a right to happiness; if this were her means, why didn't she accept it? Details crowded her confused mind. They might live in the empty house across the street, remodel it according to Jerry's ideas—red-brick courtyard, bay-trees and all that. Then ecstasy blurred her thoughts. She and Jerry . . . alone . . . together! Eating breakfast side by side,

sharing the long winter evenings before the fire. At night, asleep in his arms . . . ! No, no! She couldn't! She buried her shamed face in her hands. After all, she did have a herd mind. She couldn't live with Jerry in secret sin. Better an honest profession than a dishonest love.

She sat up, her mouth grim, her eyes steady. She would think about her work. How many shelves could she fix, to-morrow? By to-morrow, Jerry would surely be in New York, somewhere in that sky-line of brick and mortar across the river. Perhaps he would be thinking of her . . . but would he? A man like that made his attachments quickly and broke them just as easily. More likely he would be running the toe of his oxford up his pretty little stenographer's chiffon stocking. She shivered and hugged her elbows. How could Jerry's wife ever think of his spending eight hours a day with any woman and not tremble with fear?

Kitty had tried to comfort her by suggesting Glen Bruce as a suitor. He had the handsomest back, she said, of any man she'd ever seen. Daphne looked at the hanging globe that cast a white light on the city pavement. Glen's love would be like that,—reliable and steady,—while Jerry's had been the flaring illumination from a blast-furnace—brilliant, glorious, temporary. She thought of the way Glen's eyes had clung to her

at lunch. Was he beginning to care for her? If she were really majoring in rational love, later on, when she had her degree and was ready to marry, he would be an ideal mate. She had always been fond of him; their interests were congenial. She could never give him the same kind of love she felt for Jerry, but honor and respect must count for a lot. Her fancy leapt ahead: suppose she were on her honeymoon with Glen and she saw a little stream, a patch of woods, or just one swaying tree that brought back Eden, how could she endure it? Would she ever be able to banish Jerry from her soul?

An automobile came slowly down the street. In the electric light she could imagine it was Jerry's dusty gray sedan. It stopped before the house, and a man wearing a wide panama sprang out. It was Jerry! No, it couldn't be! She had created the likeness out of her desperate need.

"Daphne!"

There was no doubting the truth. Jerry dashed up the steps and flung himself beside her. Wedging his arm between her and the blistered door, he crushed her to him.

"I've had a whole detective force locating you, dearest. Why did you do it?"

Daphne's future hung suspended in one tremendous pause as she sat tense, his arms about her. Then passionate desire overwhelmed her.



Jerry's rough tweed suit, his hot breath, his warm lips feeling for hers . . .

"Jerry!" she whispered, "Oh Jerry!"

A noisy crowd turned the corner. Above the babble a thin, penetrating voice cried:

"Thanks a lot for that banana split, Mr. Parker! I'll say they give the whipped cream!"

Daphne struggled out of the embrace.

"They're coming back, Jerry. Don't."

"Damn it! Let's take a ride, darling."

Together they fled down the steps and into the car as if they were being pelted with confetti. As Jerry shifted gears Kitty called:

"Where are you going, Daphne?"

But Jerry shot off before she answered. How did she know where she was going? Was he running away with her? A cave-man, a Sabine woman? She nestled against his arm, rapturous at his nearness; and only a moment ago she had been as empty as the vacant house they were shooting past.

He drove up Flatbush Avenue and fell into the whirring line that swung around the Arch and into Prospect Park.

"We've got to get out of this funeral procession, darling, and hunt for a secluded spot where we can talk."

Talk . . . more talk! Oh Jerry . . . Why

didn't he know she wanted him to run away with her?

They left the car on the rim of the lake, packed with urbanites struggling to get a whiff of the country; and, ignoring the asphalt path, made their way hand in hand along the water's edge—quite dark save for a distant row of park lamps pricking the horizon with points of starry light.

“Daphne, my love . . . my love.”

She stood on tiptoe that her lips might meet his, her heart pressed against him, the darkness shutting them in. Never had Jerry seemed so exquisitely close as now, in the inky blackness—as if, being unable to see, she was the better able to concentrate all her senses in feeling. She ran her fingers through his hair and pressed his lips closer to hers. There was no need for speech. Words were a means for conveying thought between two people; they were more nearly one.

A row-boat splashed by, oars creaking; a lantern, hung in the stern, made a halo in the dampness. Strident voices converted a raucous laugh into a spontaneous song:

“Yes, we have no bananas,  
 We have no bananas to-day.  
 We have string-beans and onions  
 And cabbage and scallions . . .”

The lovers clung together, guarding their vibrant passion against the vulgar intrusion.

"Let's sit down," Jerry whispered and drew her on his lap.

Other boats and other songs interrupted them. How far it was from Eden! Their exquisite silence was gone.

"Don't you know, you adorable child, that you can't run away from love?" Jerry whispered, kissing the lobe of her ear.

Daphne sighed. Now they were going to talk and she would have to think. It was so much more wonderful just to sit and feel Jerry's prickly cheek, his thick hair, the heart that pounded for her, lips soft and warm . . . Jerry!

"When shall we be married, darling? I shan't trust you again."

It wouldn't be easy to make Jerry see the logic of her proposal, for, despite all his indulgence, he was more conventionally minded than she.

"Do you love me enough to give up all social life for four years while I'm getting my degree, Jerry? Just you and I in that little old house on Carlton Avenue, and the world shut out? Would you be willing to do that, Jerry?"

He laughed ecstatically and hugged her to him.

"Little silly, all the world would be shut in—all the world that I want! Oh Daphne! Think of our being married to-morrow!"

Gropingly she felt for his mouth and covered it with her palm.

"But I'm not marrying you to-morrow, darling . . . not for four years . . . not until you've proved that you will be faithful. Mother was unselfish and she bred a selfish child. I won't suffer as she did."

He freed himself impatiently.

"A four-year engagement, Daphne? Wasting four of the best years of our life! That's worse than selfish; it's criminal. You're cheating yourself, darling, too." He paused, remembering her previous question. "What did you mean about our living in Carlton Avenue?"

"I have a plan, Jerry. It isn't original. Mr. Bruce was telling us about it. It's been tried and proven." Actually presenting it was hard. She digressed. "Are you sure, darling, you would be happy living alone with me, the next four years, while I get my law degree, not bothering with friends?—just the Bramton folks and me?"

"Four years, Daphne? What makes you suppose I'll die so soon?"

She acknowledged the compliment with a kiss.

"Ready for something very radical, Jerry?"

"Are you in it, Daphne?"

"I guess I'm it. Listen, Jerry, I'll live with you here in Brooklyn for those four years while you are proving your faithfulness. If, at the end of

that time, you've been true, I'll marry you. Otherwise, we'll separate and I'll go on with my profession."

"What on earth are you talking about?" His tone was a reprimand.

"Don't be herd-minded, Jerry. Marriage isn't really the form of ceremony, nor the length of the white-satin train. It's the union of two souls . . . forever! That's real marriage. Most of what passes for marriage is really a desecration."

"Is free love so much better?" he interrupted bitterly.

"But our love wouldn't be free, Jerry. We should be bound to each other, not by law but by love. I don't want *some* of your love, Jerry. Even most of it wouldn't satisfy me. I want it all. I won't share you with any other woman."

"You'd never have to; you know that!"

"But you'll have other temptations, Jerry. You're the kind of man women like. However, during the four years that I live with you without marrying you, you couldn't be untrue, could you? You'd be holding my honor and you couldn't be faithless." She paused, and ended tensely, "Could you?"

"Of course I couldn't. I wouldn't, anyway, I tell you."

She sighed. It was hard sledding, but she felt she was making progress.

"Those four years will teach you a new self-control, darling. They will sort of fix your mind in the narrow path of a virtuous husband. You see, dear, you've been terribly undisciplined and this will be your schooling."

"I also see, Daphne, that it will make immoral the most beautiful thing that has ever come into my life. It will be making you bad, that I may be good, and I won't do it."

"Not immoral if we always stick together. God never complained about the immorality of Adam and Eve."

"And how would you educate all the old tabby-cats? Not only them, Daphne, but your mother and Grace and—"

"They wouldn't know anything about it, Jerry. It's our business. I'm not trying to change social morality; I'm trying to adapt it to our needs, darling."

"They would suppose we were married?"

"Naturally. Ethically we should be, if we take each other for all time."

"Give up this crazy notion, darling, and marry me to-morrow. I swear, Daphne, I'll always be faithful! I shan't want any one but you! That first day I saw you in the village, an intangible

something went out from me to you, and I knew, just as well as I knew my mother loved me, that you were the only girl in the world. Darling, won't you trust me?"

"Trust you, Jerry?" she whispered. "I'm trusting you with everything I possess, my soul as well as my body. If I trusted you less, I might marry you and trust the law to look out for my conventional honor."

He groaned.

"You have the damndest way of twisting things, darling."

"But you see the truth of it?" She didn't wait for his answer. "Four years isn't so long, Jerry. The case Mr. Bruce quoted lasted over twenty-five years."

"Good Lord!"

"But although they didn't know it, they were really married all the time under the common law." She would have to avoid that complication. To substitute a common-law marriage for a ceremonial one would be childish. "Don't you see, darling, how technical and absurd the whole institution has become?"

"But why shouldn't we really be married under the common law, too?" he asked hopefully.

"Because I know too much, darling. That's the worst of us modern, intelligent maidens. If I cohabit with you but neither claim to be your wife



or take your name it will be a sort of executory contract without any legal ties."

"But if you keep your own name, then, of course, people will know immediately," he protested.

"There won't be any 'people,' in the first place. I'll register under my maiden name at college, and at home I'll tell the folks I prefer using it . . . a Lucy Stone enthusiast. They'll expect something crazy like that from me. For the most part, the tradespeople and our retinue of servants will naturally call me 'Mrs. Veerland,' and I shan't disillusion them. People always believe what's easiest. They'll take it for granted we are married and our secret will be perfectly safe."

Jerry was silent. She waited for her words to sink in before she went on, coaxingly:

"I'll go on a honeymoon with you to-morrow. We'll stop in at Borough Hall first and get our license; they're good until used, and it might be rather awkward getting it four years hence. When we've filed it, Jerry, and are regular conventional old married folk, I'll put my diploma in moth-balls long enough to have two or three cuddly babies."

"I won't do it, Daphne! I tell you, I won't!"

Despite his vehemence, she felt it was his last futile protest.

"It's fighting fire with fire, Jerry. This is the only sure way I can think of that will keep you

faithful to me. I couldn't stand it, darling, if you were to tire of me and look around for new thrills. I saw too much of it in my girlhood. . . . Unless," she added, "we had a four-year engagement."

"You teasing little devil!" he whispered, catching her finger and biting it. "You offer to go on a honeymoon with me, to-morrow, and now you talk of a four-year engagement." His voice grew tense with passion. "If I agree,—and I'm not afraid as far as my keeping faith goes,—if I agree to your plan, could our honeymoon start to-night?"

She knew that he had given in, and she was suddenly afraid. What was she doing? How could she trust a man who had already compromised two women?"

"My love, my little wife," he murmured, excitedly, "I'll be faithful as long as I live!"

She captured the hand that had been caressing her ankle.

"No, Jerry! Don't! We've got to realize the seriousness of what we're doing. Couldn't we have our little ceremony in Eden, before . . . before we live together, Jerry?" she pleaded, anxious now to postpone the consummation of her plan.

"All right. In Eden, darling," he readily conceded. "Maybe by to-morrow you'll relent and use the license." When she did not answer he went on rapturously: "We'll pitch our camp in the

woods . . . just you and I, Daphne . . . all alone in the world." His words slipped into silence and they clung to each other as they thought of the future.

Finally Daphne struggled out of his arms.

"It must be getting terribly late, Jerry. I've got to go back or the Borahs will think I've run away." To-morrow such a thought would be justified. If Kitty suspected the truth! If any one did! To-morrow night she would be Jerry's mistress. Was it heroic? Cold with fear, she slipped back into his arms.

"You'll never let me regret it, Jerry?"

"Never, love! and you're not going to live in terror that I won't make good?" he pleaded.

"No, Jerry."

"Because I will! It's just as you said: I have to! It's only because I'm so absolutely positive of myself that I consent at all. How early can I call for you to-morrow, darling? We've got a lot to do." He broke into an eager recital of details. "There's your engagement ring and your wedding-ring—a little circle of diamonds, precious—and our camp equipment! Let's head for New England!"

"Don't forget Eden, Jerry. We must drive to Bramton first. I do want to plight our troth in Eden." It would be as deliberate, as premeditated as any ceremonious legal marriage; and that

would help minimize the shame she knew she must suffer, despite all her claims of intellectual freedom.

"Yes, dear; Eden first," he agreed.

They rose and stretched their numb limbs.

"Oh Daphne, how can I let you go for all the hours between now and morning!" Then, as if he were afraid of himself, he drew her back along the way they had come, lighted now by a late moon. "To-morrow night, when the old moon looks down on us, precious, you'll be my wife!"

If only that were the truth! Her conscience stabbed her, but she answered tenderly, "Yes, Jerry."

## Chapter XI

"'S THAT you, Daphne?" Simultaneously with the closing of the front door, Mrs. Borah's head, knobby with curlers, peered around the parlor portière. "Thank goodness, dear! I was worried, it's after one o'clock."

Upstairs, Kitty said she had been worried too, although her tone suggested disappointment. "Was he only the lawyer, Daphne? I thought he was the beau, and you two had run away." She sat up in bed, her head looking, in the moonlight, like an oil-mop. Now that Daphne had undramatically returned, it didn't matter who he was, so she proceeded with her own affairs. "Mother and I had a long talk to-night, and she thinks I'd be foolish to turn Edgar down. She'll give me a hundred and fifty dollars toward a trousseau . . ." The girl went on to explain how she would spend the money.

Daphne, undressing in the dark, tried to close her ears, and endure Kitty's voice as one bears with a squeaking pencil. Every nerve in her body trembled with excitement. If only she could be alone!

"Would you get a cape, for traveling, or a long coat, Daphne"

"A cape." Daphne slipped her nightgown over her head and waved her arms into the short kimono sleeves. To-morrow night would she really be with Jerry? She burned with shame and desire. If she were marrying him, there would be no shame. Was the plan so wise, after all? They both loathed it; it would kill her mother if she ever learned the truth.

"But do you think a cape has any style, Daphne? I don't want to get maternity clothes already." Kitty snickered. "Don't you think a blue-serge coat with straight lines would make me look trimmer? How much do you suppose—"

"Oh Kitty! will you keep still? I can't stand any more!" Daphne dropped into the rocker and hid her burning face in icy hands. Jerry was to call at eight-thirty. What chance would she have to think?

Kitty watched her in silence, even her dull sensibilities aware of the other's tense emotions. Her heavy face became thoughtful, and, hitching herself clumsily from the creaking bed, she crossed the rough ingrain carpet.

"Daphne dear, that was your feller, to-night?"

Daphne nodded. Perhaps it would be a relief to talk about Jerry to Kitty, who had stood up for him from the first.

"He's wonderful, Kitty! I can't help loving him."

Kitty drew up a straight chair and, pushing back the underclothes which draped it, sat on the edge, bending toward Daphne, her heavy breasts sagging beneath her coarse gown.

"Daphne, you haven't let him be . . . be too fresh?"

Daphne's jaw tightened with anger. She remembered Kitty's half-confidence years ago, and the old disgust possessed her. Did Kitty think her love was of that sort? Then shame replaced her scorn. To-morrow night at this time, to the conventionally minded, it would be the truth!

Kitty laid a warm, moist hand on her head.

"Don't tell me anything if you don't want to, Daphne. But I once knew a girl like that, and she would have given anything in the world to have had some one to confide in. She even thought of going to a priest, although she wasn't a Catholic."

Daphne felt a strange new pity for the girl she had hitherto only tolerated, and, sitting up, she reached for her hand.

"No, Kitty, he wasn't too fresh." What would this companion say if she knew that it was Daphne who was insisting on the too-fresh policy?

"Then marry him right away," Kitty insisted tensely. "It's the only thing to do. I know!"

Daphne studied their shadows on the moonlit



wall. Did Kitty really know? Was it better to marry Jerry, making sure of her own honor? That was the simple, easy way.

"I *know* what your kind of love is, Daphne. It's different from the way I feel toward Edgar; it's like an express elevator in a tall office building; it sweeps the wind right out of you. You haven't any check on its progress! But the bump at the bottom's awful!"

Kitty paused, overcome with emotion, and Daphne realized some of the shame she must have suffered. Kitty had never mingled in the radical discussions at a college, where girls thought an affair a lark and morality an outgrown cult. Did those iconoclasts really believe the arguments they propounded? Puss, a dainty little Florida production, maintained that a woman ought to marry the father of her children and that a girl's sole duty in extra-marital affairs was to prevent offspring. They used to call Daphne the last prude since the World War: what a delicious joke they would think it, if they knew her plan! She was the ground between home beliefs and school theories; and the old principles of morality could not be uprooted without tearing her conscience. She was afraid she could never dull her sensibilities to her overt action. Four years of shame!

"Kitty." She tightened her hold on the damp

hand. "If I marry him, do you suppose, by giving him all the love I shall ever possess, I can keep him faithful?"

She knew, by Kitty's hesitation, that the girl had her doubts. Surely a brief union, terminating in divorce, could not be so much better in the eyes of God than her plan of winning Jerry . . . forever?

"You can't be positive of how anything's coming out, Daphne. But the law always looks out for married women," Kitty argued sagaciously.

Daphne had made up her mind. She was going to see her plan through. Rising, she stretched out her arms, and felt a trickling of ecstasy.

"We are running away to-morrow, Kitty!"

The elder girl would have held her in a sticky embrace, but Daphne, her mind on Jerry, could not endure it.

"It's so hot, Kitty, please don't. Do you mind if I try to get some sleep?"

At half-past eight the next morning, after a sleepless night, Daphne climbed into the gray car beside Jerry, her straw suitcase in the back seat. She gave his hand a convulsive squeeze. This was her man! She was giving herself into his keeping, body and soul, and she would never doubt him again as long as she lived.

"Oh Jerry! isn't everything wonderful! There's the house I was born in; Mother would give it

to us for a wedding present. Think you could do anything with it?" She tried to sound natural, but nothing seemed real, not even Jerry, and certainly not the day that was before her.

He drew the car to a jolting stop and looked at the empty, forlorn building.

"I can make a Paradise out of it! You and I living there, darling, together . . . can you imagine it! Oh, my love!" He slipped his arm about her waist and gave her an ecstatic hug. She leaned against him, but not even the feel of his rough tweed sleeve was natural. Would she ever be herself again? Because she was giving herself to him, would the rest of her always seem different?

"We're going to the City Hall first to get our license, precious," his voice gentle, adoring. "I'm ready to take you on any terms you say, but I'm in hopes you've changed your mind."

She hadn't any mind to change this morning; she was a moving automaton, but she answered decisively:

"No, Jerry, I still believe that is the best plan. I was thinking, dear, about the time the milk-bottles were rattling, that we could ride around the outskirts of Bramton village and get into the woods without meeting a soul. You don't think I'm childish, wanting to pledge myself to you there?"

"I'd like it, too, darling."

At six o'clock that evening, under Daphne's direction, he parked the sedan on the unfrequented north side of Bramton woods, and laden with blankets and lunch-kit, followed her through the trackless undergrowth. Already, they had telegraphed Mrs. Churchill the news of their elopement.

Daphne's trousseau was a cadet-blue hunting-suit; the hat to match was gay with a little red feather. But as she made her way over the rough ground, her debonair costume was out of tune with her ashen face and tense expression.

They were spending their first night here in Eden, and at sunrise would start off for nowhere . . . just she and Jerry alone in the world. If only she were marrying him in the easy, conventional way, how perfect life would be!

"Please change your mind, darling," he pleaded, pausing with his load. "Let me get the Reverend and your mother and sister, and we'll do the thing up right."

She shook her head and hurried on. Thousands of women had married and lost out, the old conventional way: she would test the new plan that had already been proven. Oh! but it did seem awful!

They did not speak again until they were within their nook, a blue sky, flushed with sunset, overhead. Jerry set down the suitcase and, tossing the

roll of blankets on the grass, held out his arms. His new gray suit increased his unnatural pallor, and Daphne rejoiced at the physical demonstration of his emotion. He must realize the seriousness of their experiment.

"Oh Jerry! it's coming out all right, isn't it?" she pleaded.

"I swear, my darling!"

His hands were icy in her tight grasp. She kissed the fingers, then looked straight into his eyes, her chin raised, so that the gay little feather pointed downward. A childish smile quivered on her parted lips, but her steady gaze was courageous.

"I love you, Jerry, and I am giving myself to you before we are married because I believe that is the best way to keep you true to me."

"I shall love you forever and ever, Daphne, and you will never have any cause to fear my faithlessness." His rich voice, tremulous with passion, vibrated in the hushed woods. Holding her left hand, he reached in his pocket while she took off the handsome engagement ring he had bought her that morning, and held up her finger for the circle of diamonds. "Not all the ministers in the world could make you any more my wife than you are this minute, darling. Daphne Veerland . . . my wife! Think of it!

She flung herself on him with the abandon of

passionate love. In his wallet was the marriage license they were to use in four years. He had vowed his faithfulness and she trusted him. He was hers now, to-night, to-morrow, forever. She was his, he could do with her what he would.

It was past midnight when the waning moon that had illuminated Prospect Park for them the night before rose over the silvered tree-tops, shedding a white light on their little Eden, gleaming in the flowing brook and blanching the thick bushes that cast furry black shadows. The lovers lay between army blankets, Jerry's arm was Daphne's pillow. In silence they watched the moon pass its zenith across a cloudless sky. By rolling her eyes, Daphne could see Jerry, by turning her head her lips would be against his cheek, but she did not move. She felt a new peace, an exquisite sense of completeness. Her struggles for the moment were over. Right or wrong, she was Jerry's.

## Chapter XII

THEY spent their honeymoon riding anywhere, camping in strange woods, often not knowing where they were. They poked potatoes into slumbering embers, and cooked frankfurters on sharp sticks, holding them in the flames until the skins split, sputtering fat into the fire. Daphne, in blue breeches and wide-collared shirt, looked more like a lad in his teens than a matron.

At night they lay in each other's arms. Sometimes they whispered of their love, but more often emotion checked their talk, and the liquid rustling of the tree-tops was their lullaby.

In those days of uninterrupted comradeship Daphne's love had grown and ramified until it included Jerry's least gesture; his trick of looking at her out of the corner of his eyes; the sudden snap of his wrist to extinguish a match; his habit, when thinking, of screwing up his features, until his eyes and mouth became slits and his nose a puckered ball. Even his possessions shared her affection. She loved the gray cap he jammed on the side of his head, or wore backward in the wind. One night, while he was collecting firewood, she impulsively kissed the square pipe bought from



Uncle Robert. Whatever he did, or said, or touched, became hallowed. And each day she became more confident of the success of her plan.

They had decided to live in Brooklyn, and Jerry was going to buy the Carlton Avenue house.

"If we tear down the front stoop and have a basement entrance, we can make the parlor floor into one immense living-room," he whispered, not because he feared the nearest neighbor, miles away, might overhear him, but because love always whispers. "Let's have an immense fireplace big enough to stand in!"

"But I don't want to stand in it, darling. I want to sit in front of it, preferably on your lap."

"Little vamp! We'll put a bath on the third floor and stick the maid's room and a guest-room up there out of our way. I suppose you'll want the nursery on the second floor, next to us?"

The nursery! Oh Jerry! He had promised not to tease for a reduction of the four years' probation. Instead he was bribing her. She smiled into the darkness.

"Postpone that baby-talk, Jerry mine. I'm a hard-boiled female, stalking a degree." But there was nothing hard-boiled in her accompanying kiss.

She was awakened next morning by the delicious odor of frying bacon, and the consciousness that Jerry was looking down at her in adoration. Life was exquisite!

Later that day, however, sudden pity for Jerry clouded her sense of victory. He had blazed a tree with two overlapping hearts, and she was watching him lace the dart through them when he abruptly stopped and pocketed the knife.

"No, I'll finish it on our glorious second honeymoon, darling."

"Could it be any more glorious than this, Jerry?"

He nodded wistfully, and she hated herself for letting him suffer. But wasn't the fact that he cared so desperately the foundation of her success?

Preceded by letters and telegrams, they returned to Bramton Sunday afternoon.

"I can't tell you how I dread meeting your mother, Daphne. It's abominable. I feel . . . ugh! how I feel!"

"She'll never, never know, darling. . . . She's going to love you, too."

Despite her brave words, as Jerry turned the car up the circular drive and she saw her mother waiting on the steps, shame scorched Daphne's cheeks and beat in her temples.

"It was all my fault, Mother!" She jumped out and flung her arms about the gaunt figure. "Jerry wanted a white-satin church wedding, but I rebelled!"

"I wish Jerry might have had his way, dear." Tears coated the adoring eyes as they feasted hungrily on the wilful girl, brown as an Indian squaw.

Jerry paused on the gravel drive and looked up appealingly.

"I'm not going to ask your forgiveness, Mrs. Churchill, until I've proved myself worthy of Daphne. But please have faith in me. You believe love can transform a man, don't you?"

Eldon Churchill's daughter regretted the question. How could her mother believe that, when her whole life of unremitting love had proved the contrary? Love was not enough. It must be coupled with a moral responsibility. Forgetting her shame, she gloried in her sin. She was being bad to make Jerry good.

But contrary to all reason, Mrs. Churchill answered fervently, "Yes, Jerry, I do."

Grace, in coral chiffon, fluttered out to greet them.

"Welcome, prodigals! Heavens, Daphne! what an immense engagement ring for such a short engagement! And a circle of diamonds for a wedding-ring!"

Daphne thrust her hand into her pocket. If Grace had seen Jerry putting it on in the woods, she wouldn't call it a wedding-ring at all.

So the reconciliation was made. By the time

Archie arrived for supper, the young couple were discussing their plans for the Carlton Avenue house.

"If you children would live in it, I'd gladly give it to you for a wedding present," offered Mrs. Churchill, who felt a sentimental attachment for her first home.

A wedding present! Jerry and Daphne had very definite ideas about the ethics of accepting presents in their false position. He slipped an understanding arm about Daphne as she straightened her slim body.

"Thanks ever so much, Mother Churchill, but I want to give it to Daphne, myself. We've decided that we won't accept any wedding presents, as a punishment for running away."

"Add it to ours, Mother," interposed Grace. "And remember, Archie, the Lord loveth a cheerful receiver. I suppose Daphne Veerland will be just as freakish as Daphne Churchill."

"Undoubtedly," agreed Daphne, determined to carry off her next announcement with braggadocio. "In fact, I'm still going by the name of Daphne Churchill. I have this gentleman's permission, and certainly none of the family can complain."

"Joining the Lucy Stone League! For Heaven's sake, wouldn't you know it!" Grace was exasperated beyond words.

Mrs. Churchill rubbed her wrist thoughtfully.

"But, my dear, how can you prevent people from calling you Mrs. Veerland, even if you don't like it?"

Not like it! The words were celestial music, and four years stretched into an eternity.

"Oh, I shan't mind," conceded Daphne, generously. "But I'm going to get my A.B. at Barnard, and I'll enroll as Miss Churchill."

"You're going on with college! Oh, I see. Yes, it would be less conspicuous," agreed her mother, always eager to find excuses.

A week from the following Monday the couple moved into the Carlton Avenue house, prepared to camp on the second floor during the extensive alterations.

"Lord, it's ugly!" grinned Jerry as they stood on the curb and viewed their purchase. "You're not afraid to trust my vision, darling?"

Daphne squeezed his arm.

"I've caught it, too, dearest, and I love it; but I have one suggestion. Wouldn't a brass knocker that really knocks be an improvement on that lovely ivory door?" She pointed to the barred basement gate as if the alterations were already completed.

"You cute little precious, you make every place a Paradise!"

"We do it for each other, silly. Let's go in. I'm afraid you're going to kiss me, and I'll bet

Mrs. Borah's watching us with opera-glasses."

"Go to the area door, Daphne, and we'll dream from the bottom up."

Waiting, she could hear him descending the bare stairs, and her heart thumped with mad happiness. This wasn't a lovely dream, it was real! This was their home, hers and Jerry's. Here they would live for years to come, and some day, after they had used their license, she would be pushing a white perambulator through this very doorway. Awe, pride, ecstasy melted the icy fear that always lay at the bottom of her heart.

"Why, Mr. Veerland!" she gushed, as Jerry unlatched the gate. "I simply adore your house. Those bay-trees are so stylish and I have a passion for knockers that knock. I suppose your wife designed it all!"

"Cute little devil!"

In the dim hall he crushed her to him passionately and she clung to him no less ardently. Her home, her man!

"Oh Jerry, isn't it wonderful!"

"Heaven!"

He held her close to his side and gesticulated with his hat, pointing to the brown wall, scraped to the plaster, probably by a velocipede.

"Like the creamy stippled walls? Goes with the dull-red tiled floor, eh?"

"Positively. And I adore that red lacquered table."

They giggled, two riotously happy children, and Jerry opened the door of the dining-room, the identity of which was established by a green wrought-iron electrolier and a plate-rail.

"A kitchen in the front of the house! Astonishing! I didn't know it was ethical!" Daphne reduced her voice to normal tones as she groaned, "Imagine if we really had to eat in this dungeon, dear!"

"I can't imagine anything disagreeable to-day, darling. Come see the dining-room, one of our chief glories." They made their way through a narrow passage into the turquoise-blue kitchen. The linoleum was patternless, save for startling eruptions of blue and white checks scattered here and there. The coal stove, flanked by an iron boiler, was rusty; so was the sink. There were sodden wooden covers over the tubs and the windows were barred. A shed darkened the big hideous room.

"Lovely!" ejaculated Daphne, falling against Jerry in the excess of her admiration. "I've never seen anything so attractive in my life! And so original! A dining-room in the back! Ivory paneled walls! French doors! And those fascinating little stairs over there. . . . May I ask . . .?"



"Certainly. They meet the front stairs half-way up, where they turn to the right, and lead directly into the living-room."

Daphne hugged his arm, slipping her hand down until their fingers interwove.

"Please show me the garden. I can see from here that it's lovely."

They strolled over to the sink and looked through the rain-streaked shed windows, to the rectangular plot of knee-high weeds.

"The adorable brick portico! And a real garden! I didn't suppose city yards grew anything but wash!"

Jerry squeezed her fingers until they hurt.

"How do you like the brick fence with the ivy?"

Then they both burst into a merry peal of laughter, for two alley cats had scrambled on the fence and stood with arched backs.

"A fight in Paradise? I can't endure it. Come," she ordered, and side by side they squeezed up the basement stairs.

"Kidding aside, this is going to be the finest home in the world." Jerry paused at the head of the stairs to press a kiss on her eager mouth. "Not grand, but wonderfully livable. We'll take plenty of time and hunt around for exactly the furniture we want, not because it belongs to some damned old period, but because we like it!"

She nodded enthusiastically. She and Jerry hunting for furniture . . . what fun! Everything was fun; life was immense!

The second-story front room, with its large alcove was where they were to live while demolition and reconstruction took place. The wide flooring had been scrubbed for their arrival, and a white enameled maid's suite was expected any minute.

"Home, Daphne!" Jerry exclaimed, setting down her old suitcase and their big bundle of new linen. "What's that about having the price for a loaf of bread and buying a wistaria?" He crossed the room and from a bright oval spot between the windows pretended to pluck a blossom from the trellised wall-paper, which he carefully pinned above her heart.

She breathed in the fragrance of the phantom flower.

"I shall always love wistaria! Oh Jerry! I love everything in the world! I never knew I could be so happy!"

He went off to buy some lunch, while Daphne unpacked the bag. How cozy to see their clothes in the closet, her pink nightgown and his pajamas on the door, the linens on the shelf! Settling down into married life was even better than a honeymoon. It was not transient, with each passing day a tragedy. They would live together like this for

the rest of their lives. She gazed through the wistaria wall-paper beyond the next four years, into the decades to come. She and Jerry and their children's children!

Lunch they ate sitting on the plaid automobile rug, leaning against the lavender trellis, their shoulders touching.

"Um, Jerry! these ham sandwiches are elegant!"

"Chocolate éclairs in that package, Daffodown-dilly."

"Ooo, Jerry!"

She nestled in the hollow of his shoulder.

"I love you so much, Jerry, it hurts."

"I love you so much, Daphne, I'm mad with happiness!"

What, she asked herself, could be more beautiful than their love? But the fact that she asked the question showed she had not submerged her childhood conscience.

## Chapter XIII

"Yo-HOO! Daphne! . . . Heavens! how do you get up there? Are you sure she's in?" Grace appealed to a carpenter in blue overalls.

He crossed the basement hall, treading heavily on springy wooden curls, and roared up the skeleton stairs, "Misser Veerland!"

Grace looked scornfully at the chaos about her: workmen in every direction, plasterers, electricians, carpenters, at goodness knows how much a day, wasting thousands of dollars on this miserable little house. Daphne and Jerry were certainly crazy; she had thought so all along, but she had never realized until now the extent of their insanity.

In response to Daphne's answering call, the carpenter graciously gestured, with his plane, toward the unfinished stairs and paused to watch Grace climb the skeleton steps, her gray-velvet skirt held knee-high. She wore a short squirrel coat and blue velvet toque, with silver grapes like Christmas-tree ornaments.

Half-way up the first flight she paused and shook her head as she saw the embryo stairs lead-

ing down to the back of the house. Possibly they knew what they were doing, but it all looked crazy to her. Turning at right angles she continued her ascent, carefully making her way through the bedlam of the parlor floor.

"The worst is over," cheered Daphne, from above.

"Thank Heavens! You ought to give a monkey party."

"Well, aren't you here, darling?"

"The mess gets worse every week," Grace retaliated. "You must be terribly discouraged."

"Not a bit." Daphne led the way into the front bedroom, still decorated with faded wistaria, and furnished with the white-enameled suite. Through white-net curtains streamed the western sun, and a cylindrical oil-stove exuded a comfortable warmth. "We're cozy as the dickens here, and Jerry's rigged up a kitchen in back. Last night we had pan-broiled chicken, canned asparagus, and éclairs. Jerry adores cooking; he says every man does. Come, look at our arrangement."

Grace shook her head. The grapes clattered coldly.

"When I see you two pitching away money, pouring it out in buckets, I could scream; to say nothing of all the work you're having!"

"Work? It's fun!" Daphne swung around a rocker for Grace, and, dropping into a willow

chair, sat sideways, hugging the back. True, the alterations would take three times as long as they had estimated, but each day had its own excitement.

"And what on earth do you want with a whole house?"

"Most families are two in the beginning," argued Daphne, looking toward the empty nursery with tender yearning. Three and a half years was a long while.

"When's the little stranger due, Daffy?" Grace's protruding eyes gleamed with interest.

"When I get my degree; four years from September, maybe."

The elder girl laughed harshly. "Sounds highly sophisticated, like your plan to go to college and keep your maiden name."

Daphne shrugged. "I'm going to Barnard next fall, under my maiden name."

Grace rose and walked restlessly about the room, as if searching for something worthy her attention. She picked up an enlarged snap-shot of Daphne in breeches and wide collar, bending over a fire. On the other end of the bureau was a photograph of Jerry, lunch-kit in hand, blanket slung over his shoulder.

"We took those on our honeymoon," Daphne explained, ecstasy trickling through her as she remembered the day.

"Some bride!" laughed her sister. "The last person in the world I'd expect Jerry to fall in love with."

Her words rang in Daphne's head. The last person . . . Ah, but she was, she must be!

"Go ahead and get dressed, if you're going to Eleanor Dundee's with me," Grace ordered impatiently. "When you've seen her apartment, you'll realize what idiots you were. Three large rooms with every modern improvement, even an electric ice-box that freezes those darling little cubes of ice!"

The telephone, on the baize-covered card-table in the alcove, rang imperiously. Daphne dashed to the instrument and sat on the side of the white iron bed, legs crossed, one slippered foot swinging happily. Jerry called up almost every day at this time.

"Hello." . . . "Oh, hello, Jerry dear." . . . "Yop, they're getting along finely. Grace is here." . . . "She'll like it eventually; she hasn't much vision." . . . "You did! Bully! Just the thing to set off the living-room!" . . . "Yes, I'll be there—same time; same place. 'By, dear."

"You two certainly have it bad!" laughed Grace, indulgently. "What's he bought? A baby-grand piano?"

"No, a solid-brass coal-hod."

"For Heaven's sake—"



"Hell's sake, darling: coal and hell, you see." She lolled back on the pillow, her hands behind her head, reckoning the time she must leave Eleanor Dundee's to meet Jerry.

"Will you *please* get dressed!" Grace picked up a post-card from the bureau. "'Greetings from Kitty Hoglan.' Who's she?"

"Kitty Borah. I wonder how her marriage is turning out!" Daphne rose obediently. Poor Kitty! How frightful to have one's marital success depend on money! She selected the henna velour dress Jerry had bought last week. Life was ironic! She could be happy with Jerry in an attic.

Eleanor Dundee lived on the Heights, in an old section of the city that had suddenly refused to succumb to the rapid inroads of lodging-houses, and resumed a degree of its departing dignity despite the flapping of furnished-room signs. It was only a few blocks from Glen Bruce's office, and as Daphne walked along, her raccoon coat buttoned to her chin against the icy salt air, she remembered the agony she had suffered that hot July day, trying to live without Jerry. Yet she hadn't really known what it meant to love him, then.

The coöperative apartment-house extended a whole block on Pierrepont Street; very fine, it was, with sandstone gargoyles, canopied entrance, and a door-man in Park Avenue trappings.

"The mere act of arriving home to an atmosphere like this, even though I had five pounds of potatoes under my arm, would be inspiring," whispered Grace, as the bronze elevator shot them up to the sixth floor.

A maid, in lustrous black satin, with the tiniest of net aprons, ushered them into a large, austere living-room. Putty-colored walls, hangings of mauve hand-blocked linen, and dark floors sending back a sharp reflection made an esthetic setting for the colonial furnishings. The straight ladder-back and Windsor chairs, a stiff tête-à-tête, a square table with a glass lamp were cold and unfriendly. There was not a redeeming human touch, not even a magazine to produce the semblance of any living contact.

"Museum," whispered Daphne, hunched awkwardly in one of the lowest chairs. What a queer home, she thought, for a wealthy, beautiful divorcee!

"I loathe this furniture," whispered Grace, "but I bet it cost a fortune."

Then Eleanor entered, moving with the poise of one perfectly sure of herself, and the room became a chaste setting for her rare beauty. She was an ash-blonde with silvery light hair, drawn back from her forehead into a simple knot at the nape of her neck, depending on color, rather than coiffure, for its charm. Her skin was milk-

white, devoid of all color, save as she skilfully tinted it, hiding the faint suspicion of freckles that were visible in the bright light. By darkening the lashes of her purple-blue eyes, she gave them the velvety look of a pansy, which impression was further accentuated by the chiffon frock that graduated from a pale lavender at the neck to a royal purple at the hem.

"So this is the little sister!" She held out a graceful hand of greeting before there was time for an introduction.

Daphne rose awkwardly, and poked her left hand into the pocket of her raccoon coat.

"You sound as if you were a million," she answered shortly.

"That's the way I feel a good deal of the time, and when I realize that in two years I'll be thirty, I have the shivers!" But there was no slightest suggestion of any emotion in the beautiful immobile face.

Daphne decided that she did not like her—until she added:

"I hear from Grace that your husband is a most fascinating creature with a lot of hair like a lion's mane, and that he's simply crazy about you."

Daphne struggled not to look self-conscious. She hadn't expected a woman as beautiful as Eleanor to be so gracious.

"I'm rather fond of Jerry, myself."

"Oh they're such turtle-doves, it's positively bourgeois," scoffed Grace. Then she yanked the conversation around to herself. "It's as good as settled that Archie'll get the Brooklyn call, Eleanor, and I'm really seriously thinking of buying that apartment downstairs as Mother's wedding present. We'll probably be married in June, go away for a month, and move to town the first of September."

They had followed Eleanor into the bedroom, with its high canopied bed and a sprightly chintz.

"Certainly they are beautiful big rooms," said Grace, looking triumphantly at Daphne.

"I like it," Eleanor agreed without enthusiasm. "Of course I'm away such a lot; Freddy's people, in Washington, think it's a crime I don't live with them, and Father and my sister beg me to stay in Pasadena, but I like having a little cubby-hole I can call my own."

They returned to the living-room, and Eleanor demonstrated how a woman could look graceful sitting in one of the Duncan Phyfe Windsor chairs. Even when she smoked it did not look anachronistic, she accomplished it with such quiet poise.

"You've simply got to help me with my trousseau, Eleanor; I've got oodles and scads of things to buy," Grace boasted.

Eleanor smiled faintly.

"You'd never want me to help you, Grace, I'm so fussy; I've spent as much as six afternoons buying a single hat."

Daphne, slumping into as comfortable a position as possible in the straight chair, groaned inwardly at the waste of time. But Grace was much impressed.

"Really? Daphne thinks I'm the biggest fuss in creation. She selects her dresses by shutting her eyes and stabbing a mail-order catalogue with a pencil."

"Not any more," refuted the girl. "Jerry chooses them."

Eleanor turned her head in interest.

"You ought to get his help, Grace. I've been intrigued with that little henna frock Daphne's wearing. You're not really and truly going to be a lawyer, as Grace says, now that you're married?"

Daphne nodded vigorously, to account for the flush that mounted to her cheeks. There were moments like this when, without any warning, shame swept over her. Then she checked her self-condemnation. Beautiful and gracious as she was, Eleanor had made a mess of her married life: that was what Daphne was avoiding by her intelligent plan.

"Yes, I expect to go to Barnard in the fall."

"Mother's lawyer has promised to let her fuss around his office," Grace explained, going on with the subject. "How many years do you need, Daffy—three? He's a magnificent man, Eleanor. If we settle in Brooklyn, I'll have him to dinner so you can meet him. He's 'way over six feet tall, and broad-shouldered and dignified. You'd make a stunning couple together; and it's his long suit marrying wealthy girls."

"I think that's unnecessarily catty," protested Daphne, angrily, wondering how many little groups were spending the afternoon in the same way, and if she was bored because she was not used to it. Eleanor, sitting placid, her fingers fitting into the grooves of the chair arm, seemed perfectly happy; but, then, she could waste six afternoons selecting a hat.

Tea was served in quaint gold-bordered china, and Daphne was biting into a delicious crumpet, when the grandfather's clock in the hall tolled dolefully.

"Half-past four. I've got to gobble and git." She stuffed the muffin into her mouth.

"For Heaven's sake! what's the mad rush?" Grace demanded. "I'm going way out to Bramton, but here I sit."

"I'm due to meet Jerry on the New York side of the Brooklyn Bridge at five. We hoof it home

every night, and it makes us hungry enough to eat Mrs. Borah's corned beef."

Grace rolled her large, slightly protruding eyes toward Eleanor.

"They're perfect nuts! If you'd see the old house they're spending a fortune on, you'd agree with me. But Jerry dug his way into Mother's heart. She says, 'It's wonderful for a young man to take such an interest in his home.' I said, 'It takes capital as well as interest'—another joke wasted. You'll be up this week-end, Daphne?"

Daphne, like a dutiful wife, said she would consult Jerry, and made a hurried departure. When she mounted the subway steps, twenty minutes later, Jerry was waiting for her. She paused to watch him flip over a page of his evening paper and it occurred to her that he was as graceful, in his masculine way, as Eleanor Dundee.

When he saw her, he shoved the paper under his arm, and sprang toward her with a vital animation.

"Fifty thousand people crawling in every direction, darling, and only one you!" He held her chin as he pressed an eager kiss on her vivid lips.

She loved to have him say things like that.

"I know, Jerry. Queer, isn't it!" They fell in step, a long swinging stride that strained Daphne's narrow skirt to the limit; their heads were bent,



for the November wind blew sharply across the river. She slipped her hand into his big brown patch-pocket, and he covered it with his long fingers. They were blind and deaf to their surroundings: to the lights that twinkled along the foot-walk, to the hoots and whistles of the boats beneath them, the clang of the trolleys on each side; conscious only of each other. Jerry was her man. They would go through life hand in hand, as they were at this moment. The thought was entrancing, and she skipped, now and then, as she walked.

"I called on the magnificent Eleanor Dundee, Grace's friend who got the divorce and big alimony."

"Like her?" Jerry was smoking his square pipe and he spoke out of the corner of his mouth.

"I think so. She's really very beautiful, but rather dumb . . . spends six days buying a hat. Grace is going to try to marry her off to Glen Bruce."

"I hate that sugar-apple."

"But you never saw him, dear!"

"What of that? He was the damn-fool who told you about this crazy plan . . . Excuse me, Daphne; I promised not to grumble."

She tightened her hold on his fingers. Did he worry about their relationship as often as she? Was she right in making him suffer three and

a half years longer? Pity for him ate into her happiness.

They walked in silence until they were nearly across the bridge, when they turned to look at the scene behind them. The darkness was punctured by a million lights from towering office buildings: a giant graph of twinkling illumination against the black sky, that ascended and dipped, to rise again in steps; a colossal chart visualizing the business magnitude of the second largest city in the world.

"It looks as if all the stars of heaven were parked there, before mounting into the sky for the night," mused Jerry.

Daphne, gazing across the water at the brilliant scene, was filled with the same elation that had stirred her that early crystal morning when the world had been too beautiful for her to appreciate alone. She remembered how lovely had been those last moments before her disillusionment. Again her mind shot from childhood exultation to the old revulsion, and her pity for Jerry was checked by a firm resolution to complete the contract. Of course it was hard on him, hard on them both; but he was being trained, and discipline was always painful.

"Jerry dear, you don't love me any the less because . . . I think we ought to go on with our plan and see it through?"

“Love you less, my darling!” He pressed her to his side, his rich voice exquisite music to her sensitive ears. “Daphne, if each one of those lights represented some man’s love for his wife, they wouldn’t all of them equal my love for you!”

## Chapter XIV

THE next year slipped happily, uneventfully by. Archie's call to Brooklyn was delayed, so that the wedding had to be indefinitely postponed. In April, while paper-hangers and plasterers usurped the house, Daphne and Jerry started their garden, spading the clay soil, already inclosed by a brick fence and boasting of a center flagged path. They worked at a furious pace, sifting, doctoring, and planting until the long twilight was completely spent.

Their first planting was a wistaria vine, and it was accomplished with no little sentiment.

"I shall always love this plant the best, Jerry. Remember our first day in the old boudoir?" As she poured humus about the roots, she thought of Jerry pinning on the imaginary flower. Their dreams were all coming true!

"Symbol of our love, darling." He was sitting on his heels beside her, and when he would have hugged her to him, she warded him off.

"Remember the neighbors."

"Damn the neighbors! Can't I kiss my wife under my own vine and fig . . ." But the sentence

went unfinished. His words had stabbed them both.

There had been nights, during the winter, when Daphne had awakened in the grip of sheer terror, her gown clinging to her breast, cold with sweat. She was unmarried, and living with a man! How could she, of all people in the world? She whose life had been embittered by that very sin. A childhood text would ring in her ears: "To him who knoweth to do right. . . ." She had no claim to call herself an intelligent radical; she was a traditional sinner, and she was forcing Jerry to be one, also. To-morrow she would give in and Archie should marry them. Calmed by her decision, she would snuggle close to Jerry and slip back into dreams that were permeated with the joy of being his wife. But with the morning she gloried in her sin. Where other women had failed, she was succeeding . . . such an unequivocal success!

For them there had been no struggle or readjustment, no bending of the weaker will to the stronger, no give and take. Both had craved to do all the giving. Sensitive to their relationship, they had been careful not to add the slightest strain. So the winter had passed, radiant with love, rich with sympathetic tenderness. Nevertheless there was lacking a certain virile healthiness. It was the music before the drama begins, a prelude that was

to last four years. The house was their theme. They made it their consuming interest, and night after night, in the flash-light's circular illumination, they went about in the empty rooms, planning, studying, deciding: How many spindles for the banisters, where to place the base outlets, how high the mantel.

As a bribe to encourage their visits, Mrs. Churchill had given Jerry a coal-black horse for Christmas, which he had promptly named Napoleon, and week-ends at Bramton were all the holidays they took from their growing garden. Daphne's college friends who wrote hinting for an invitation, received no encouragement, and exaggerated reports of Jerry's wealth having been circulated, Daphne was denounced as a snob. So the first summer in Arcady slipped into an exquisite memory and a quarter of the probation was passed.

Daphne entered Barnard in September, but found that four major subjects would necessitate studying evenings, so she halved her work, allowing two years for her degree. It was not that she had abandoned her ambition to be a lawyer, but merely postponed it. As Jerry said, a greater task lay before her; mothering and rearing a family could not be relegated to men, law would be her avocation.

House-furnishing monopolized them that win-

ter. They scoured New York, just as Jerry had predicted, buying a pie-crust table for this spot, a pair of branch candlesticks for the mantel, a rug for the hearth.

"We won't be bound down to any definite period, but we'll just pick and choose the best from them all. . . . Leave it to me; you won't be disappointed." And Daphne, with small vision in interior decorating, willingly agreed.

In March, Archie received his call as assistant pastor of a fashionable Brooklyn church, to take effect the following fall, and careful plans were put into immediate operation for a spring wedding.

"I hate the thought of being away two whole months," Jerry mourned, as he was dressing for breakfast, a week before the wedding.

"It was your suggestion, dear." Daphne ran a comb through her wind-blown bob and smiled at him in her mirror. Bless his dear sympathetic heart!

"I know; we had to. Your mother would be beastly lonely. Ready?" He stood, his hands in his coat pockets, viewing the room, pride and irritation mingling in his tone. "It's so damned wonderful, I can't bear to leave it."

"Me, too," agreed Daphne, slipping her arm about his waist as they started for the hall. "I



think I love this room the best, Jerry. It's the most ours; I mean, it always will be ours, even when the rest of the house is running over with children." She looked with affection at the satiny mahogany: the big spool four-poster, the high-boy and bureau with their honeymoon snapshots in tooled leather frames; the bright-flowered chintz and the little footstool before the hob grate.

"I like each room the best when I'm in it," he asserted boyishly. Side by side, they descended the thickly carpeted stairs, snug to the feet, and as they turned into the living-room, he broke out with uncontrollable satisfaction:

"Damned if it isn't bully!"

The room occupied the entire floor, with three leaded French doors at each end, opening on tiny semicircular balconies festooned with trailing ivy. Opposite the stairs, beside the wide brick fireplace, stood Jerry's brass hod, gay with daisies. On long, open shelves multicolored books begged to be read; the baby-grand by the front windows offered its ivory keys temptingly; an open Governor Winthrop desk promised every convenience; and the cozy grouping of chairs, ash-trays, and footstools suggested the ancient art of conversation. The whole room was a reflection of Jerry's vital joy in living.

"Lord, Daphne! two whole months!"

"Cut it, Jerry. You'll be in the depths of melancholia before you reach the portico if you go on at this rate."

He laughed gaily, the same musical laugh that had first lured Daphne, and shouted the news of their approach to Hannah.

Half-way down the basement flight, where it branched to back and front, it was Daphne who paused.

"Oh Jerry, you really are wonderful! Remember what this used to be?"

They kissed in sheer happiness, and Jerry squeezed her soft waist beneath the yellow smock.

"Precious Daffodowndilly!"

The dining-room furnished in early English, was as austere as Eleanor Dundee's apartment, save as it was warmed by the morning sun that streamed through the three leaded doors. Weather permitting, they ate on the brick portico, under the sage-green awning, glancing with paternal pride at their garden, radiant with spring flowers. A row of candytuft bordered the flagged path, behind them were orange calendulas. Two rose-bushes bloomed against the south wall, and the wistaria vine, grown to the top of the brick wall, dropped papery blue petals. Beside the portico were two pansy beds and a multitude of little triangular faces peered up at Jerry and Daphne.

"See that purple pansy, Jerry? It looks like Grace's friend, Mrs. Dundee."

"She'd better butt out of our garden."

"I wonder how she and Grace will get along as neighbors." Grace had induced her mother to buy the apartment under Eleanor, as a wedding present. "Think of her place compared with this and she likes it better." Daphne smiled with satisfaction as she rang for Hannah to remove the fruit-plates.

"An ex-tout to open the front door for her, and a nigger to take her up to her three dinky rooms!" scoffed Jerry. "Mark my words, she won't be there a year before she regrets sinking eight thousand dollars in that little place. I can't for the life of me see how she and Archie are going to be happy." He stirred sugar into his farina savagely.

Daphne wondered pityingly if his disdain were not prompted by jealousy: Archie and Grace were starting life with a comfortable conventional marriage; they would enjoy a peace she and Jerry had never known. Oh, but they would soon! Only two years more! She smiled at him adoringly, her broad teeth gleaming snow-white in contrast to her garden-tanned cheeks. Reaching across the gaily flowered breakfast porcelain, Jerry captured one of her hands and sang in his fine baritone:

"In my little garden there are roses,  
In my garden there are violets, too;  
In my little garden there is sunshine,  
In my little garden there is you."

Daphne drank in the song, her lips parted in a rapturous smile. All day long the tune would echo through her thoughts, repeating the message of love.

They made a brilliant picture—rare as it was attractive—in that city of dingy back yards: the gay flowers; the red-brick house with its little balconies spilling ivy; the brick wall and portico; sage-green awning; orange-wicker furniture; a man with coppery locks; and a girl in yellow, her animated face framed in straight brown hair. It was very charming.

"I tell you I can't bear to think of going away and leaving all this for eight weeks," Jerry repeated for the third time. "It'll play the devil with the garden—there's a big juicy worm now!" He jumped up from the table and swooped upon the pansy bed, sending a long earthworm over the stone wall with his fork. "I've half a mind to spend Friday nights here, to check up on Hannah!"

"Yes you will not!" protested Daphne. "Think you're going to stick me up in the country and leave me there all alone?"

"Jealous of Hannah?" he chuckled.

How could he know that his words awakened an old anguish? Hannah was fifty, and thin as a herring, but Daphne's mind leaped back to the Swedish waitress, who was plump and squeezable. Oh, but she mustn't blame Jerry for the sins of her father.

"I'm not jealous of Hannah, but of the worms," she laughed with a saucy tilt of her chin.

Grace was married on the twenty-ninth of June, and the Bramton Presbyterian Church was packed to suffocation, for not only was the entire congregation invited but a special train from the city transported the married friends who had temporarily slipped out of Grace's life.

Bramton was vociferously scornful of the ostentatious display. Did Grace Churchill think she was the first girl in the world to get married? Hum! it was about time; she was gettin' close to thirty! Nevertheless, the bidden scrambled for front pews, and the uninvited banked the opened windows with a mosaic of shining eyes and gaping mouths.

Daphne was the bride's sole attendant; Grace had taken almost as much interest in the pink chiffon frock as in her own stately satin. It hooped at the hips, with festoons of forget-me-nots, and the short, full skirt, the slim legs and white slip-

pers, gave an effect of a cute ingénue, in direct contrast to the bride's queenly dignity.

Old Mr. Green, Pastor Emeritus, performed the ceremony, in a quavering, uncertain voice. The wedding party fell into place about him. Uncle Robert, who was to give the bride away, had been squeezed into evening clothes for the first time in his life. His cheeks, between spectacles and drooping mustache, were ashen, his shoulders sagged, the stiff white shirt bosom bulged out of the low-cut vest. He looked smitten with a fatal disease. Never had he been called upon to execute so difficult a task.

Jerry was best man, slim and elegant in black broadcloth and white silk, a velvety gardenia in his buttonhole. Daphne was more interested in his appearance than her own. Last night she had washed his head, working the liquid soap into a thick white lather and rinsing it off until the dripping hair crinkled into little spirals, that it might glitter with high lights. Dressing in her old office, she had delighted in inserting the pearl studs in his heavy-silk shirt, and tightening the bow-tie beneath his freshly shaven chin. She loved all the intimate touches; they made her feel he belonged to her.

Now, as she stood holding the bride's bouquet, heavy with the scent of lily-of-the-valley, she watched Jerry out of the corner of her eye, won-



dering if he, too, envied Grace. This wedding, despite its effort at pomp and display, was as bland and mild as Archibald Meeks. There was no drama, no uncertainty about it. Archie would make a devoted, adoring husband; Grace would be a smug, complacent wife and, some day, a scheming mother. That was all there was to it. She wasn't worried whether or not she was justified, nor was she tortured by a harassed conscience, to be wakened up in the night with cold sweat, longing for four of life's choicest years to hurry, hurry by!

Old Mr. Green proclaimed Archie and Grace man and wife, and, with bowed head, petitioned Heaven's blessing on the couple, in a voice that may have reached to the Mercy Seat but could not have been heard beyond the fourth pew.

Married! Daphne felt a lump in her throat. Poor Jerry! Was she fair? She peeped at him between her lashes, and saw his well-creased trousers and new patent-leather pumps. Then she remembered the first night he had called. His caressing foot! Before that, he had caressed other women—no, she mustn't think of them, but the fact remained, Jerry was morally frail. If any woman did come into their lives during the next two years, he would be obliged to exert a self-control he had not realized he possessed, and it would renew his confidence in himself. She



straightened her drooping shoulders, beneath the chiffon frock, until the blue velvet bow at the back of her neck hung perpendicular as a plumb-line. Life was frightfully complicated, but she was ready to meet it.

Immediately after the ceremony there was a reception at the Churchills' home: automobiles packed the circular drive and trailed half-way down the hill. By half-past nine the guests had all streamed past the bridal party, murmuring indistinguishable nothings, which completed their social obligations, whereupon they had gone off to enjoy themselves. Even the members of the reception line had forsaken it. Mrs. Churchill hurried about, needlessly harassed lest some of the guests depart supperless. Jerry had been captured to expound the mysteries of the gift-room: Who gave the silver coffee-service? Who that ducky Tiffany lamp? A whisper: who sent that atrocious marble bust? Old Mr. Meeks, Archie's father, a New Hampshire storekeeper, hid in the back of the hall under a palm, his wife beside him. Only Archie and his bride, like captain and first mate of a sinking ship, stood in weary readiness to speak to any one who chanced into the deserted parlor.

The rest of the house was packed with gay, laughing guests, milling about the gift-room, sitting on the stairs, waiting in line to take their turn

in the jammed dining-room. Those who had eaten lolled on the porch, or petted in the parked cars. Everywhere was a frilly-frothy swish of party dresses, and high, excited laughter.

"Wow, I'm tired!" groaned Daphne to Glen Bruce, out in the hall. "A reception is an endurance test." In the excitement of the occasion she forgot the strained relations between them.

"You don't look as if you could ever be tired," he protested. "I hear you've been an indefatigable worker this winter. Haven't you treated me rather shabbily? I've never laid eyes on you since that day, nearly two years ago, when you skipped off—"

"Without pay," she added pertly.

He nodded.

"Without pay."

"I did treat you shabbily, and I've been counting on the family to sort of make my peace." They were wedged into a corner, so close together that she was forced to tilt her head 'way back to look into his face.

"Seriously, Mr. Bruce, I intended writing you and telling you just how much I appreciated your kindness. You were a peach."

"Nonsense!" he interrupted, obviously embarrassed. "I was an utter failure. Who is that stunning woman near the porch door? I've seen her several times in Brooklyn."

He designated a tall, slender blonde in lavender metal-cloth, quietly plying a huge orchid feather fan with the slow motion of one perfectly sure of herself. Her even profile, the curve of her chin and throat, the simplicity of her ash-blond hair, drawn back from a low forehead into a knot at the neck, gave more the appearance of a beautiful statue than a thinking, feeling human being.

"That's Eleanor Dundee, a rich divorcee—quite a rhyme! Come on, I'll introduce you. Grace is going to buy the apartment beneath hers, on Pierrepont Street, and I fancy you'll have a chance to meet her again at some of the Meeks' soirées."

Daphne decided, as she worked her way through the crowd, that she didn't want Glen Bruce to fall in love with Eleanor Dundee; not on account of Grace's sarcastic remark about his marrying rich women, but because she felt as if there were something relentless about the beautiful blonde; a cold selfishness much the same as she imagined his first wife to have possessed—which was just the reason why he would probably fall for the same sort again.

"Come on over and break up the tête-à-tête; Eddie Hopkins's wife will be jealous. Blondes are born to make wives jealous."

An hour later, Grace stood half-way up the stairs; her white satin court train, smooth as

cream enamel, flowed from her shoulders to the bottom step, where Daphne waited. Archie stood above his wife, with eyes only for her stately loveliness, an expression of unbelievable rapture on his broad, flat face. Crowding against the smilax-twined banisters, aquiver with excitement, pressed the guests, waiting for the bride to throw her bouquet.

Daphne's glances flicked past them all, impatiently. Ah, there was Jerry, by the door. Not another man in the room wore evening clothes with his careless distinction. They couldn't measure up to him in any way, and she was treating him like a renegade! Had he suffered much to-night? Two more years . . . Was she cruel?

A swirling white comet, confusion among the guests, and a bashful country girl caught the bridal bouquet with an expression of guilty surprise.

Daphne followed the court train upstairs.

"I'll have her ready in fifteen minutes, Archie," she promised as the groom turned into her old "office" to dress.

"Twenty," corrected Grace. "How did it go, Daffy?" she whispered, when the two sisters were behind locked doors.

"Great! Come on, get out of your foam."

Grace sat on the bench before the vanity-table and allowed her sister to remove the cap-shaped

veil. "It makes me blue to think I can never wear it again," she mourned. "Isn't it adorable! You were an awful fool, Daffy, not to have a real wedding. It's the thrill of a lifetime." She carefully repaired the damage done to her perfectly marcelled hair, and slowly unfastened the shoulder of her pearl-embroidered gown, as if loath to remove it. "Every one I know is married . . . wonder when I'll have another chance to wear it."

"At Eleanor Dundee's wedding. She's made quite a hit with Glen Bruce."

Grace stepped out of her gown, an artist's model in white knickers, shirt, and lacy brassière.

"Really? that's interesting. My dress is certainly pretty! Tell Mother to be sure and put it away in blue paper. Hand me the stockings in the middle drawer."

Daphne obeyed and in silence watched her sister pull on the champagne-colored hose. She had lived with Jerry almost two years and yet old Mr. Green's few mumbled words made Archie belong to Grace as Jerry did not belong to her. She had completed half the plan; wasn't that enough?

"Did you feel kind of funny just after you were married, Daffy?—now, I mean."

Daphne thought of the exquisite moment in the woods when she had held both Jerry's hands and all doubt gave way to love.

"Funny?" she repeated softly.

"Yes, sort of . . . it isn't that I'm afraid of Archie, but . . . Heavens! I can't get this seam straight: my leg looks like a corkscrew. Thank the Lord I wasn't married the year Gretta Kenmore was; I'd loathe being saddled with an old-time wedding-dress. Get out my hat, will you? I think the price-tag is still in it . . . wish I could put it on the outside. I told Archie not to tear down the stairs too fast; it's only fair to let them use up their confetti."

Just before Grace was wrapped in the chiffon scarf, Mrs. Churchill came in, wiping her thin nose on a yellow Duchesse-lace handkerchief her husband had bought her after an obvious misdemeanor.

"One last look at the bride, Mother. I promised to have her ready in fifteen minutes." Daphne might have been a funeral-director.

"Remember, Mother, to send me all the newspaper clippings!" cautioned Grace, allowing her mother to take her in a tense embrace. "Look out for my hat . . . I wish I didn't have to be swathed in a veil."

From the head of the stairs, Daphne watched the mad confusion: the bride and groom plunging through a storm of polychrome confetti, followed by a pandemonium of honking horns, cowbells, and automobile sirens. Lonely, she went in search of Jerry; he ought to have a bell in each



hand; he loved this sort of fun. But he was not among the groups that came trooping back into the house, shouting and hurraing.

Bruce came up the path with a frying-pan and a tablespoon, looking rather sheepish.

"Some youngster gave me this to beat," he apologized.

Daphne smiled.

"Have you seen Jerry? He's got to corral the crowd for the eleven-o'clock train."

Bruce looked about and shook his head. Together they slowly mounted the steps, studying the eddying crowd. She wondered if Jerry were too wretched to enjoy the fun, and a sense of guilt again stabbed her.

Then she saw him. He was sitting sideways on the swing, his black silk ankle resting on a sharply creased knee, in a relaxed, negligent attitude, which was belied by the eager bend of his head and the look of keen interest in his azure eyes. Eleanor Dundee sat at the other end of the swing, and he was feasting on her loveliness, as she, in turn, gazed at him, while she slowly waved the lavender ostrich fan. They looked like fairy-tale folk, rather more fabulous than real: the prince and princess who lived happily ever after. Weary guests jammed the doorway, ready to depart, now that the bride had left, but Jerry leaned toward his companion with flattering absorption, a light



in his eyes Daphne could not bear to see directed toward any one but herself. He had looked at her with just that expression when she snapped his picture on their honeymoon.

She turned suddenly to Glen, unwilling to have him view the *tête-à-tête*.

"Would you mind getting a list of those who go to town, from Mother, while I hunt up Jerry?"

For a minute she stood watching the two in the swing. This was what she had dreaded from the instant she knew Jerry's history . . . her successor! How his hair glittered under the parchment bridge-lamp! She hadn't intended to make it beautiful for Eleanor Dundee. Was she really going to be jealous of the first woman Jerry looked at? She hadn't expected him to be a woman-hater, and even Glen Bruce, who had none of Jerry's pagan love of beauty, was impressed by Eleanor. Daphne told herself she wasn't going to be an idiot.

Breaking a heavy-headed white rose, from a huge bowl on the willow table, she tossed it at Jerry, forcing a vivacity into her tone:

"There's no rest for the wicked, Jerry. I've a job for you."

## Chapter XV

THE next day reminded Daphne of the one after her father's funeral. Florists came and collected the palms; the camp chairs, strapped in dozens, were carried away; and two village charwoman gave the confetti-strewn house a thorough cleaning. Daphne, dismantling the gift-room, where last night the silver, cut glass, and china had been displayed on long damask-covered tables, tried to lighten her spirits by singing, slightly off key:

"In my little garden there are roses,  
In my garden there are violets, too;  
In my little garden there is sunshine,  
In my little garden there is you."

But she succeeded in making herself homesick.

If only she and Jerry might return to their little garden! She wondered if she had exaggerated Jerry's admiring gaze. He had not mentioned Eleanor's name last night, when they had talked over the wedding with her mother until the small hours. Up in her "office," she finally launched the subject by asking if he didn't think

Eleanor beautiful, and he had answered with unaffected candor:

"Of course she's stunning, but I'm wondering, Daphne, if it isn't a tiresome beauty. She couldn't hold her husband, you remember."

Daphne had agreed with an eager nod and had backed up for him to unhook her fairy frock, not because she couldn't do it herself but because she delighted in his ready assistance.

Now as she slipped a bright silver vegetable dish into a red-flannel bag, she assured herself that that glimpse of Jerry on the porch had nothing to do with her feeling of depression. She was just plain homesick.

Mrs. Hennesy, one of the charwomen, summoned her from the foot of the stairs. The Bramton working-women always treated their employers with haughty disdain.

"I found this-here on the hammock outside. What'll I do with it?"

Daphne ran downstairs and relieved her of Eleanor's plumed fan. Once more she visualized Jerry's eyes gazing at the lovely divorcee.

"All right, Mrs. Hennesy, I know whose it is. I'll mail it to her."

"Huh! looks like the Queen of Sheba's!" sniffed the country woman, contemptuously. She was one of Bramton's conscientious objectors to the showy wedding.

Returning to her work, Daphne tossed the fan on a pile of empty boxes and fitted crystal finger-bowls into a useless white kid case. But the orchid feathers fascinated her, until finally she picked the fan up and waved it back and forth. It did not move with undulating grace, for her, but jerked unevenly; and she sniffed with some of the char-woman's scorn, at the fragrance it exuded.

She hated women who depended on fans and perfumes for their appeal. With her small nose still wrinkled, she packed the handsome accessory in a long box, and went on with her task.

Jerry was quiet and preoccupied that evening: Mrs. Churchill, white with fatigue: nine o'clock saw them all on their way to bed.

"Wow, but I'm tired!" grumbled Jerry, out of the corner of his mouth, sitting on Daphne's old table-desk, finishing his pipe while he tugged at his tie and collar.

"Grace would be flattered if she knew how funereal it seems without her. I've been blue as indigo for Carlton Avenue, Jerry."

He glared at the black bowl, tossed his pipe on the desk, and bending over, untied his oxford. His face was red from the position, his voice muffled.

"By the way, did you come across a lavender fan? Mrs. Dundee phoned to ask if it was found."

Eleanor Dundee had called him up! How did she know his business number? Daphne struggled to keep the sharpness out of her tone:

"Yes, it was on the swing. I'll mail it in the morning."

Jerry raised his foot and hooked his heel on the desk, his knee hiding his face.

"You needn't bother. I said if it were here, I'd drop it at her apartment. I'm not coming out to-morrow night, you remember."

"Oh Jerry!" Daphne faced stark fear. Did Jerry stop loving one woman and start in with the next as suddenly as one changed the record on a phonograph? That was the way he had been with the others. Now was he through with her? She was getting their night-clothes from the closet and she leaned giddily against the door.

"Why, Daphne, you know perfectly well I planned to spend one night a week at home, on the garden." His rich voice was irritable.

Courage returned to her. She had exaggerated childishly.

"I want to plant dahlias to-morrow, dear, so they'll bloom in the fall."

Was he staying in town just for their garden? If she only knew! She dared not express her fear, lest she might be unfair to him, so she said nothing.

Jerry felt the silence, and tossed his oxford across the room noisily.

"Don't you want them, dear?"

"I don't consider them so terribly important," she answered coldly.

"If that's the way you feel, I shan't bother to argue." He slammed the second oxford after its mate.

Daphne's shoulders were high under the pink-silk nightgown. She shut her large mouth grimly, but her heart was heavy with misery as she climbed into her twin Windsor bed next to the wall and turned her back on Jerry. She felt helpless and alone. It would be a comfort to pray, but she had ceased all prayers so long as she was violating the canons of her own creed. She felt like the boy, in some book, who had called himself "the lone wolf." If Jerry were slipping away from her already, there was no way she could hold him! To-morrow night he would be with Eleanor in her chaste apartment that acted as a foil for her grace. Would he drink her in with his eyes in his flattering way? Please, dear God—but no, she couldn't pray.

Jerry switched out the light and his bed creaked under his weight. Would it do any good to warn him that he was playing with fire? But didn't he know, himself? Tears overflowed and sank into her pillow.

"Daphne."

She maintained a stubborn silence. He must not know she was crying.

"You're not going to be silly, darling?"

She muttered an indistinguishable answer and edged closer to the wall. Jerry's slender fingers were on her shoulder, turning her toward him. Her heart paused in its dull beating.

"Daphne, darling, what have I done?" His voice quivered with pathos. Opening her tear-soaked eyes, she saw his white pajamas a blur in the dark; his breath on her cheek was a mixture of tobacco and peppermint dental cream. He held her wet cheeks between his palms. "My precious, I haven't forgotten what I am guarding. You've trusted me so far. Won't you go on? I'll never fail you!"

"Oh Jerry!" Her arms shot out, thin and white. She wrapped them about his neck and strained him to her. "I'm a disgustingly jealous beast, darling, but she is so beautiful!"

"She's nothing but a wax clothing-model, love. I won't go near her. I'll come out here to-morrow night. I shan't let you suffer, Daphne. Tell me you have faith in me, precious."

The fervor of his embrace completely eliminated her last fear. She had been horribly unfair to him, but she was too joyous to feel any shame. He was utterly hers!



"I'll never doubt you again," she promised as he wiped her cheek with his handkerchief. "Don't let me develop into a jealous tyrant, darling. Please take Eleanor Dundee her fan."

Jerry protested, but finally consented. All night she lay in the circle of his arm, and the next morning they laughed merrily as they tried to make his bed look as if it had been slept in.

Although Daphne had promised Jerry she would trust him, she found that her pledge did not prevent her worrying over his Friday nights spent in town. The first week she had sent him to Eleanor's to prove her own faith; but what about the other weeks? If only she had been able to ask, in an offhand way that second Saturday, when she had met him at the station: "Well, Jerry, see anything of the widdy, last night?" A dozen times she had formed the question, but she had been afraid her voice would sound strained. Moreover, if he had seen her, wouldn't he say so? But he never mentioned her name. They neither of them did. To hide her unfounded worry, Daphne was always particularly gay on Saturday afternoons as she drove Jerry home. She hadn't any right to be suspicious. Yet, argue as she would, she looked forward eagerly to their return to Brooklyn, which would end his free evenings.

The weeks nevertheless passed rapidly. She

rode L'Aiglon every day and played noisy tennis with the village girls and boys. In the evening she met Jerry, whisking him home for an early supper and twilight ride. Every night, before they went to bed, Jerry played one game of cribbage with Mrs. Churchill while Daphne sat on the arm of his chair, moving the red and white ivory pegs and marking down the winner in the cover of the box. These games meant a great deal to Mrs. Churchill, who had received so little attention. Her eyes were bright when she called timidly: "Fifteen two; fifteen-four and a pair are six." It was understood that the season's loser was to treat to a show in town, and Mrs. Churchill, partaking in her first tournament, showed an unsuspected sporting instinct.

The last Saturday in July, as Daphne and Jerry strolled in Eden, she sang with more happiness than harmony. They were going home Monday, back to their cozy breakfasts and long, uninterrupted evenings, with no more torturing Friday-night separations. Her voice vibrated through the woods in a pæan of exultation:

"It ain't goin' to rain no more, no more,  
It ain't goin' to rain no more,  
How in the hell can the old folks tell  
It ain't goin' to rain no more?"

"If only you'd stick to one key!" grumbled Jerry, holding the overgrown bushes apart for her to slip through.

"You sing 'In my little garden,' Jerry. It's home for us on Monday." Her heart tripped rapidly as she pushed into Eden. Here she had met Jerry. Here it was she had given herself to him. And she planned, fancifully, to bring him here when she should tell him of their coming baby. The thought made her gray eyes wistful and she slipped her arm about his waist as they crossed the thick grass and sat beside the brook.

"Mother was at me again to finish the summer in Bramton, Jerry dear, Exalted-of-the-Lord. I told her we couldn't leave our beloved home so long. However, I salvaged the week-ends."

"I think your mother's right. It's ridiculous for you to spend August in the hot city, Daphne." Jerry slapped his oxford with Daphne's worn old crop, which he had appropriated.

"Fiddle! I'm just as anxious to get back as you, dear. I might butt into a summer course at Columbia if it isn't too late."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," he contradicted irritably. "For Heaven's sake, Daphne, don't act as if you were possessed by a demon! Is it necessary to keep your nose in a text-book every second?"

She sat up very straight, her chin tilted above the scarlet tie, her shoulders raised.

"What's eating you, Jerry? You know perfectly well I never put my nose inside of a textbook all last winter while you were around."

"All right. What's the use of fighting?"

"Who's fighting?"

"You are. You fly into a rage about nothing. For my part, I think it's ridiculous to go back to the hot, dirty city for August when we have this opportunity—"

"But you were the one who made such a fuss about coming in the first place," she interrupted, apprehension edging her voice.

"I know, on account of the garden. But it's coming along great, with the big licks I put in Friday nights."

Fear, born the night of Grace's wedding, repossessed Daphne. Was he seeing Eleanor every week and was that the real reason he didn't want to return to town? If only she might ask! But it would prove her lack of faith, and she had promised to trust him. She combed the grass with her fingers, struggling to check her jealousy. Then reason comforted her. How absurd! Eleanor Dundee would never stay in town through August!

"Please don't be so cross, Daffy," Jerry

pleaded, his voice suddenly tender. "Not here, in Eden, darling. We'll move to town whenever you say and you can pack in a dozen courses if it makes you happy."

She gave him a broad forgiving smile.

"If you'll just offer me my own way, I'll do anything in the world you like, Jerry! . . . The Jeremiah Veerlands, of Carlton Avenue, Brooklyn, are spending the month of August with Mrs. Veerland's mother in Bramton." Then she remembered guiltily she had no right to call herself Mrs. Veerland; she must be careful.

"Crazy loon! . . . But the city is beastly now!" Reaching for her, he drew her onto his lap, whispering, "Little Tartar!"

With Grace's return, life at Bramton became exceedingly festive. The bride not only had a large trousseau to display, but she decided it would be an easy and economical way of entertaining her old friends, made congenial again by her marriage. Heaven only knew it was going to be tight squeezing when they had to live on Archie's paltry four thousand! Therefore the big square house was in a hubbub of confusion most of the time, while over the week-ends it was crowded to capacity.

Daphne learned through Grace that Eleanor had not gone away. The settlement of her father-

in-law's estate, in which she was a beneficiary, kept her close to her lawyer.

"Every one leaves her money!" protested Grace.

"Silver spoon," Daphne commented with apparent indifference. She pretended to herself that the news had not upset her. Suppose Eleanor were in town; it didn't prove that Jerry saw her. But, although she was always one of the gayest of each house party, beneath her heartiest laugh was a lurking fear. It was only when she was alone with Jerry that she could put into practice her pledge to trust him. They would often sneak off together, away from the crowd, for a twilight canter, sometimes dropping in for a brief call on Grandma, for Jerry loved the old kitchen and its cheery inmate. Then she forgot everything, save the delightful completeness of life.

The week-end Eleanor visited Grace, Daphne went out of her way to prove that she was not jealous. She found, to her immense comfort, that Eleanor in the flesh was in no way so alarming as the vampire of her imagination. She was quiet with an immobility that needed a drawing-room and artificial light to make her attractive. In the morning, on the noisy tennis-court, she was quite dull and out of place. Watching her, Daphne remembered what Jerry had said about her beauty



being of the tiresome sort, and for the first time she realized why Jerry might prefer her own boyish, swaggering style.

When Eleanor was put out of the impromptu tennis tournament after her first futile set, Daphne felt really sorry for her and dropped at her feet, while she watched Jerry's reach and quick returns.

"I never could abide this game," Eleanor complained.

"I love it. I love everything!" Daphne cried in a burst of fervor. How happy she was that Jerry had never suspected her irrational jealousy!

The first of September the Meekses moved to their three-room apartment on Pierrepont Street and Daphne and Jerry returned to Carlton Avenue to eat breakfast again on their brick portico, amid a riot of fall flowers. Daphne loved the flowers as never before: dahlias big as chrysanthemums splashed the back wall with daubs of color—orange, purple, maroon—like paint on an artist's palette; cosmos in delicate orchid shades quivered in the slightest breeze; candytuft and Delphinium lined the path, and a row of double hollyhocks banked the brick wall. Each flower was proof of Jerry's love, a testimonial that he had spent his Friday nights working for her and not philandering.



She had one disappointment. On her pilgrimage about the garden that first morning, she looked from the empty corner where the wistaria vine had been planted, to Jerry.

He nodded.

"It died, Daphne. I might have planted another, but somehow it seemed like cheating."

She knew that he, too, had felt a superstitious regret over the death of their symbolic vine. Squeezing his hand, she agreed:

"I'm glad you didn't, Jerry. Let's always share our troubles honestly."

Daphne once more met Jerry on the Brooklyn Bridge and they walked home. She told him of the dozen little events of her uneventful day, but he no longer interrupted with eager questions as he used to when he was impatient to hear about the carpenter, the electrician, the upholsterer. They walked along beside their attenuated shadows, for the sun was still up and the sky-line twinkled with no romantic love-lights. Their steps lagged. September lacked the invigorating qualities of November.

One pleasantly cool evening, just before her return to Columbia would put an end to these walks, she realized uneasily that Jerry had not spoken for a very long while. She had been delighting in the first snap of fall. It reminded her of crackling fires, lighted lamps, and drawn

shades, shutting out the world and inclosing Jerry and her. Their home had been furnished so late in the spring that they had not been able to enjoy the winter, and she was just smiling at the low Brooklyn shore-line when she became conscious of Jerry's protracted silence. Of what had he been thinking all that while? Looking up at him, she saw that his gaze was directed across the bridge toward the Brooklyn Heights, where the ornate coping of Eleanor's apartment-house was visible to the knowing eye. Was she the cause of his pre-occupation? The thought filled Daphne with sudden consternation that she could love Jerry as she did and yet be insensible to his thoughts. Finally, unable to bear the silence any longer, she asked:

"Worried, Jerry?"

"Yes."

She hadn't expected that answer. Her heart beat at the base of her throat, the clanging trolley sounded a knell. Was it anything to do with Eleanor?

"Want to tell me, dear?"

"It's the damned men's clothing folder I'm supposed to get up. I loathe the job, but it's a big house and we've been trying to horn in for years."

"Good Lord, Jerry! I thought you had heart disease!" She skipped beside him. "Bet I could help you, dear."

"Damn it! I'll bet you could, Daffy. Will you make a stab at it after dinner?"

"Crazy to."

Again they walked in silence, but this time Daphne found it very cozy, for she was sharing it with Jerry. There are as many kind of silence as of speech.

That evening she worked on the card-table with pencil, paper, and scissors, clipping and gluing like a child.

"Here's my idea, Jerry: Make the cover of transparent paper, to represent a window. These men are supposed to be very stylish, like Glen Bruce. The strip can be glued together and slid around and around as if they were walking past. Get my idea?"

Jerry sat with his elbows on the table, his fingers plowing through his tawny hair.

"Hold on a second. Have it a store door, with all the men coming out, an endless procession, in overcoats and golf togs and every old dud. I'll bet there's something in that, Daphne! Just let me sleep on it." His blue eyes gazed at her with the expression she adored. "You've got a brain that clicks, haven't you, precious!"

Daphne tried not to look self-conscious, but she lamented the telephone bell that interrupted Jerry's praise. It was Grace, so Daphne prepared for a long chat by slipping down in the desk chair

and resting her legs across the wooden trash-basket. But for once Grace was brief. Her blue-and-gold bedspreads had just been delivered by Mae Ritter, interior decorator, and the apartment was practically settled, so she was planning her first dinner-party—the Veerlands, with Eleanor and Glen Bruce to make six.

Eleanor! Daphne's mouth straightened. Was she really going to prove a worry? In any case, she had come into their lives. It was up to Jerry to prove himself. He had promised Daphne he would never forget that he held her honor. She wasn't going to be afraid.

She accepted Grace's invitation with enthusiasm. Any night would suit them. They hadn't a single date.

When she rang off, Jerry had pushed aside the card-table and was lolling in "their" chair, waiting for her. She sat on his lap, burrowing her head in his shoulder and slipped her hand over his strong, heavy-beating heart.

"It was Grace, Jerry. The Meeks' social season opens next week with a dinner to Glen Bruce, Eleanor Dundee, and us." Did his heart quicken its beat or did she imagine it? She withdrew her hand, feeling disloyal, and pulled his face down to her lips. "Be sort of fun. We've been regular recluses."

"Oh, I don't know. What's any more fun than this?"

Dear Jerry!—of course she trusted him!

Grace had employed the assistance of a popular New York interior decorator in selecting her furniture, admitting, with a toss of her glossy head, that she didn't pretend to know everything. The result was very handsome, unquestionably expensive, and too perfect. Human beings were an intrusion, as they would be if sketched into a draftsman's diagram. The crisp taffeta cushions on the hard sofa were as unapproachable as haughty ladies in church, the ponderous needle-point chairs defied any one to hide their handsome design, the very rugs resented the contact of shoe leather with their glossy silk texture.

The meal was served at the end of the living-room, on a long refectory table that gleamed with wedding gifts. In compliance with Grace's suggestion, all surnames were abolished and conversation flourished in an easy, jovial manner despite the interior decorator's intimidating efforts. After dinner, Archie struggled with the ponderous chairs, submitting them to the ignominy of a cozy semicircle about the fireplace. Conversation stumbled on books. Grace talked most of the time, while Eleanor, in a delicate blue-georgette dress, turned her large, soft eyes from one speaker to

the next, and demonstrated how it was possible to enhance even such a portentous Cogswell chair.

"I do think there is the greatest lot of filth getting into modern books!" Grace exclaimed, drawing in her chin with disgust. "There isn't a decent moral person left in the world, according to them." She paused suddenly, remembering Jerry's history, and added pleasantly, "But, then, I suppose I'm old-fashioned!"

"Most of us are," agreed Archie. "A lot of those poor chaps don't know where they're going, and it's always the lost child in the crowd who makes the noise."

Daphne sat very tense. If not knowing where one was going caused immorality, then she was very moral. What would they think if they knew her secret? Poor Jerry!—how did he feel? Her heart ached for him and she wished, with poignant helplessness, some one would change the subject.

But Jerry picked up the argument, as if he were quite impeccable.

"I bet those fellows are bound by the decalogue just as much as the rest of us. Their sex rubbish is only for publicity."

"That's what I say," concurred Grace, with Aunt Hester's asperity.

It was Glen Bruce who abruptly switched the topic. Daphne, looking at him in gratitude, knew,

by the way he shifted his gaze, that he had been watching her. Her burning cheeks grew even hotter. Did he suspect? Nonsense!

As they were leaving, Jerry impulsively invited them all to his house for dinner.

"How about two weeks from to-night, Daphne?"

She seconded his invitation, with false enthusiasm, for she didn't want to get involved in any social set: it was contrary to their original plan.

"I do hope the garden will still be flourishing," Eleanor said gently. "Jerry's talked of it so often."

Jerry had talked of the garden *so often!*

Driving home, Daphne was very silent.



## Chapter XVI

Now that the house no longer monopolized Daphne's interest, she tried to center her enthusiasm on her work at Barnard. It was great to be connected with the largest university in the world! Delightful to have Jerry, a home, and college all at the same time! Yet, for all her forced exultation, there was an unreality about it that deprived her of the exuberant joy she had experienced at Smith. She took no part in the athletics, joined no clubs, kept herself detached from the girls, studying them with the curiosity one generation has for the next. She felt as if life were marching by while she stood on the side-lines marking time. Not until the license in Jerry's wallet was duly signed and filed would she really live.

One noon, as she and a thin, black-eyed girl in her German class ate fruit salad at a noisy *rôtisserie* on Broadway, conversation became unusually personal.

"I think it's great that you're going to become a lawyer! It's the right idea. I'm majoring in math—going to be an architect." Daphne's companion paused to eye dubiously half a *maraschino*

cherry, risked it, and went on: "I don't expect to marry. Not enough to it."

Daphne smiled vaguely, thinking of breakfast that morning, when Jerry had come in from the garden and dropped a Gruss an Teplitz into her lap as he sang, "In my little garden there are roses." Yet only two years ago she had been as pedantic as this girl across the table.

"Civilization's booked for a new code of morals, anyhow, now that women are economically independent," went on the student, with an air of prophetic wisdom. "We no longer have to put up with any old boob, for a meal ticket. I suppose we might have a lover for a few years, but what sane woman wants to be stuck with a man after she's forty?—well, fifty, anyway."

Daphne had heard plenty of arguments like this, at Smith, but never had her sensibilities been so offended. Her mother could not have shown more disgust than she as she responded, "Isn't your idea a bit swinish?"

Her companion showed no resentment, but answered with a condescending shrug:

"Maybe your life's sheltered and you don't know what's going on in secret."

It was Daphne's turn to blush. Who was she to judge? She thought with envy of the days when morals were chiseled in stone.

After that she always tried to eat alone.

Her studies were planned not to encroach on Jerry's free time, but he encouraged her to work in the evening. It gave him a needed opportunity, he said, to mull over a lot of half-baked plans. So after dinner he lolled in the arm-chair, his soles turned toward the fire, while she pored over her books, on the card-table beside him: the desk was too far away. Sometimes his hand would rest on her shoulder or gently stroke her neck. She was able to do very little studying, for how could she understand the relation of dogma to skepticism when her thoughts were centered on his caresses? By nine o'clock he was ready for a game of cribbage, and with a childish gesture she swept the books to the floor.

Life was almost perfect! She even looked forward to the dinner party. Eleanor would realize, in their home, how congenial were she and Jerry. That afternoon she stopped on her way from Columbia, to have her hair marcelled for the occasion, and while Jerry drove down to the Heights for the guests, she hurried into a new white-net dress. She wanted to look childish and cute, as different from Eleanor as possible.

This she accomplished, for Eleanor Dundee, in a black velvet sleeveless gown, was as queenly as royalty ought to be. Her white throat, the delicately molded shoulder-blades revealed by the deep V were so exquisite that Daphne forgot her

weeks of tolerance and sincerely hated her. How often had Jerry bragged to her of the garden? If only he were not so susceptible to beauty!

"Your home is utterly charming!" Eleanor insisted with unusual fervor. "The glimpse I got of the living-room was delightful and this is one of the loveliest bedrooms I've ever been in."

"You'd think it was magnificent if you had seen what they started with," bragged Grace, slipping off a gold-metal coat splashed with reds, blues, and greens, fit for the daughter of King Midas. "Heavens! but I look pale!"

Eleanor strolled slowly about the room, admiring the carved-acorn bureau knobs, the spool-bed, the bright little hooked rug. "I love this early American furniture," she said enthusiastically. "What's in back, Daphne?—a guest-room?"

"Oh, no," Grace explained sarcastically. "It's unfurnished at present, but it's going to be a nursery for the little darling who's expected the nineteenth of September, two years hence—no, my mistake! The nineteenth falls on Monday that year and it would disturb the laundress; the date has to be advanced to Wednesday the twenty-first. That's what majoring in intellectual love does for you, Eleanor."

"Shut up, Grace! you're not nearly so funny as you suppose," protested Daphne, tartly.

"Well, I'm sure I don't feel funny." Grace ap-

plied more rouge to her sallow cheeks. "I feel like the devil and I'll bet I'm coming down with the grippe, in which case I'll leave for Bramton in the morning. Give me a dose of soda, will you, grouch?"

"Mind if I go down before it's quite dark? I'm awfully anxious to see the garden." Eleanor hung her blue cape over her arm. "I really know quite a bit about gardening. Jerry's telephoned for my advice a couple of times, and I want to see how he's profited by it."

As a hair will weigh down a chemist's balance, Eleanor's offhand remark sent Daphne's doubts down and her faith soared. Once more she had suffered unnecessarily! Would she ever control her stupid jealousy?

"Yes, Eleanor, go down; he said he was anxious to show you the cosmos. . . . I'll fix you in a jiffy, Grace." Daphne suddenly felt capable of arranging the affairs of the world.

Later, in the living-room, while Archie hovered over Grace, trying to make her comfortable, Daphne selected "Humoresque" and inserted it in the Duo Art for Glen.

"I hope you haven't forgotten you still owe me three-fifty," she reminded him laughingly, as she adjusted the roll. Looking up at him over her shoulder, she was suddenly quite sure he cared for her, and she felt a selfish satisfaction: if a

handsome, prosperous man like Glen Bruce could care for her, it wasn't so strange as Grace supposed that Jerry should, too. She heard his rich, musical voice out in the garden and she smiled happily. What a joy to trust one's husband absolutely!

"Isn't Eleanor Dundee charming?" she said to Glen, with genuine sincerity.

"No; she's rather beautiful but not charming." He was gazing keenly at her. "There's a difference, and I prefer the charm." Daphne flushed. Was he referring to her?

"I know what you mean," she agreed, thinking guiltily that he illustrated the distinction himself: he was handsome, but Jerry had the charm.

Never had Daphne's home seemed so real, so part of her life, as when she sat at one end of the table, Jerry at the other, entertaining their first company. Archie and Grace had been up for dinner before, and her mother had stayed often, but this was the first time they had had six! Some day there might be six Veerlands—she and Jerry and four children! Her cheeks were hot with excitement, her eyes gleamed in the light of the lavender candles.

"Don't forget to have Archie ask a blessing," warned Grace. "We often need the aid of the Almighty to make us truly thankful for our meals, don't we, Archie?"



"Then you'd better save it for some less festive time, because you're going to have a darned good meal to-night," laughed Daphne. It was fun to feel giggly over everything.

She loved to watch Jerry carve the turkey; the white breast fell away under the sharp knife like whittlings from a pencil. Whatever he did, he accomplished with graceful ease. She felt an overwhelming pride in him. He was her man, not because of legal bonds but because he loved her! It was not immoral; it was beautiful. She looked at Grace, who was frowning. The conversation was centered on banks and Grace knew nothing about the subject. How shocked Grace would be if she knew the truth! Yet Daphne wondered if she didn't love her Jerry twice as much as Grace did her adoring husband.

Eleanor was interested in banks. She faced Jerry and leaned her white shoulder toward him. "I'm depositing in your trust company now, Jerry. Did you know they pay two percent on accounts over three thousand?"

The query shot through Daphne's mind: Did Eleanor telephone him to ask about banks, too? But she would not allow herself to drop back into that morbid slough. Instead she chimed in gaily:

"And the robbers charge me two dollars a month for handling my account. Another case of



'From them that hath not shall be taken away' and so forth!"

"Call time, and start some other subject," pleaded Grace. "With us, discussing bank-accounts is like talking of the hole in the cruller."

Daphne expanded in the success of her dinner party. Faithful Hannah, in a new gray-sateen uniform, was doing splendidly, the caterer's fruit salad, artistically shaped like a pineapple, was delicious, and she had every reason to believe the mousse would be equally good. She flashed a smile at Archie, who was the first to finish his salad, while he held forth on the disadvantages of his Phi Beta Kappa key. She might look like a kid in her teens, but she was showing Jerry that she could serve an excellent dinner!

Glen Bruce disagreed with Archie: brains were the only hope of civilization. Daphne toed the rug uneasily, trying to locate the buzzer to summon Hannah, while she waited for Grace to jeer about majoring in intellectual love. That was exactly what she was doing—placing her intelligence against her taboos. But Grace was arguing on the cultural distinction of the Phi Beta Kappas. Much relieved, Daphne leaned down and looked under the table to locate the button, which was not in its accustomed place, because of the enlarged table.

What she saw caused her to jerk her head up as

automatically as one draws away from fire. But the brief glimpse had branded a picture on her brain! All her fears rushed back, smothering her.

"Please find the buzzer for me, Glen." Her voice was a frightened whisper.

Conversation became a confused babble. She felt as if she must poke her fingers into her ears to shut out the noise. Jerry talking too! How could he? Was he doing it still?—caressing the back of Eleanor's sheer stocking with the toe of his pump? Would it be possible to sit through the rest of the meal?

She didn't think she would have minded so much if they had been holding hands. It would have seemed less sneaky, less revolting. How often *had* he seen Eleanor? Exactly what were their relations?

She toyed with the mousse, pretending to eat, for she knew Glen was watching her. He had said it never worked out. How had he put it? Hundreds of lawyers were growing rich on wrecked unions such as hers. He had tried to save her. The gray walls, dim in the candle-light, seemed to be falling about her. The end of her home, the ruin of her life . . . and all the time Eleanor sat there as cold as a statue of virtue, while the black pump was caressing, caressing the sheer silk ankle. Daphne set her jaw, her hands clenched in her lap. To be compelled to sit and pretend everything was

all right . . . ! She thought of her mother, and rage welled within her. She wanted to jump up and call to Jerry: "Take her if you want to. Take her; I won't endure this torture!"

She rose, but instead of uttering vituperations she said shakily, "Shall we girls go up for coffee?"

"What's your rush, Daphne? Eleanor isn't finished with her cream," Jerry protested.

"Oh, pardon me." She sat on the edge of her chair. Jerry didn't want to be interrupted in his secret love-making. Jerry, Jerry!

Was this really the end of her life with him? She couldn't believe it, she wouldn't. He was only fascinated by Eleanor; he was flirting with her, but he wouldn't be faithless.

"I was thinking it would be fun for us all to go out to Bramton for a week-end while this weather lasts," Grace suggested. "Mother would love to have us, and Archie promised to preach there every once in a while."

A week-end of misery such as she was suffering now! Daphne's hatred included Grace, who could even suggest such a thing.

"It sounds very delightful to me," Eleanor said gaily.

"I'm going up to start the percolator." Daphne left them, afraid to trust herself longer.

Grace was feeling so utterly wretched that she

broke up the party shortly after the men joined them.

"I feel like the wrath of Jehovah, and I know I'm coming down with the grippe," she complained as she thrust her arms into the metal evening coat. "It's too bad to drag you home, too, Eleanor."

Jerry insisted on driving them back, and by half-past nine Daphne was alone in the big living-room, with Glen and her agonizing thoughts. She wished he would go. How could she possibly chatter when the all-important future had become too intolerable to consider? . . . Jerry and Eleanor, Jerry and Eleanor! . . . She leaned toward the fire, her eyes strained, her lips moving slightly.

Glen fitted on another log and drew up a straight chair. He had the habit of selecting small chairs inadequate for his bulk.

"I know you don't want me to stay, Daphne."

She looked up in surprise, shaken out of her worries for the second.

"How do you know?"

"I saw what you saw."

"Oh!" The fire became a red blur. Her locked fingers caught in the folds of white net. "You think it means . . . the end?"

"Probably only the beginning," he said very gently.

She nodded. That was her belief—the beginning

of the end. Jerry was slipping, slipping, and she had no way to hold him.

Glen crossed his arms over his wide dress shirt, and dug his chin into the winged collar.

"I wonder, Daphne, if you'd feel better knowing that I've guessed the truth in your relationship to Jerry? A secret shared is less burdensome. Catholics get comfort from their priests, and clients from their lawyers. It isn't unusual."

Daphne sank back in the chair and closed her eyes. What difference did it matter who knew? If her plan was a failure, nothing mattered.

"I shouldn't have quoted that unusual case, Daphne," he apologized. "But how could I know, then, the significance it might have? And Jerry ought never to have consented!"

"Don't blame Jerry, Glen." She sat up, eager to vindicate him. "It was all my fault. He carries our license about with him all the time, crazy to use it. He abhors the plan! Our only justification is its success!" Her voice quivered and she paused abruptly.

Glen shook his head disapprovingly.

"You thought that was the way to keep his love?"

She nodded, the curls over her ears bobbing childishly.

"It's a four-year trial. I know you don't think four years would prove anything, but I counted on

it to weather just such a temptation as this, and give his self-control a chance; only . . .” She picked up one of the white-ribbon streamers that hung from her shoulder and snapped it between her hands. “I wish Eleanor were not quite so exquisite. Jerry adores beauty!”

“And you would really leave him, Daphne, if . . .”

She nodded emphatically before he could complete the sentence.

“But I haven’t lost yet; maybe this isn’t the end. At any rate, I’ll keep my teeth in to the end.”

He nodded and rose, stamping down his black broadcloth trousers.

“You would, Daphne. You’re heartbreakingly adorable.” She was so absorbed in her own misery that she did not realize he had walked to the front window opening on a tiny balcony, until his voice came from far away: “My God, Daphne! I feel like a damned harpy. Don’t you know I’m waiting for the murder of this love so I can have what’s left?”

She had been right in her surmise! Poor Glen! Life was a succession of ironies.

“There wouldn’t be anything left worth the having, Glen,” she answered very gently.

He recrossed the room and stood over her, his arms locked across his chest as if he were afraid to trust them.

"I'll take what little is left and nurture it, dear. I'm not proud. Now I've told you, this will have to be good-by. I shan't be coming to these parties any more. I'd better not see you."

Daphne was filled with tender pity for him; yet so selfish is human nature that her next thought was for herself:

"I've lost my job in your office, Glen?"

"I'm afraid you have, Daphne."

She nodded understandingly, and, rising, stood beside him. The top of her curls came to his broad shoulder. How big and protecting he was! If love came in an alabaster box, and she could choose whom she would pour it on, he would be her choice—great, kind, tender Glen. She wished he were not slipping out of her life now, but in the same instant she realized that his going meant Jerry's staying, and her eyes lighted with sudden happiness. No, she hadn't lost yet.

"Good-by, Glen. You've been wonderful to me." She had a sudden desire to kiss him, but decided that if he really loved her it would not be kind, so she held out her hand.

He pressed it in a tight hold.

"You deserve to win," he said generously. "If there's any way I can help you, I'm always ready."

She stood at the head of the stairs until she heard him cross the tiled hall below and shut the front door, then she dropped into the nearest seat



and stared at Jerry's favorite chair—capacious, high-backed, of taupe mohair. There she often snuggled on his lap, after Hannah had clumped up the stairs, alarm-clock in hand. Was it possible their life together was almost ended? Was her hundred-percent venture a failure?

Perhaps, she told herself bitterly, this was to illustrate that right never came out of wrong; but it had for that other woman! She rose and began straightening the living-room, as she had seen her mother do a hundred times. Jerry's cigarette ashes powdered his chair, his burnt matches fell short of the hearth, his handkerchief, folded tent-like, lay on the floor. Why wasn't untidiness a vice? Yet, picking up after him, her heart ached the more.

As she locked the French windows she saw him swinging down the street, his fedora hat over his right eye, a buoyant swagger to his walk. Could he possibly feel like that, and be faithless?

He came bounding up the stairs, lighting a fresh cigarette, and tossed the match toward the fireplace, missing it again by a yard.

"I wish you wouldn't be so slovenly," protested Daphne. How often we substitute a peccadillo for the real grievance!

Jerry's blue eyes opened in surprise.

"I'm not slovenly, Daphne; I'm just on good terms with my home."

"Lock the back windows, Jerry." Each word was wrapped in ice and handed to him with frigid austerity.

She picked up the white scarf Grace had borrowed, and went upstairs, trailing the long fringe after her. Their bedroom was chilly and she sat on a cricket before the unlighted hob fireplace, her full white skirts billowing about her. She might have posed for little Miss Muffet or Polly Flinders, but certainly not an outraged wife.

Jerry came up and fussed about the big bedroom, shutting the window, folding down the white crocheted counterpane, and flattening the pillows—all Daphne's little tasks. Finally he went over to her and, stopping, turned her face up to his.

A shiver went through her, half delight, half fear. Jerry was hers; he had given her something no other woman could ever share. He was flirting with Eleanor, but he would never be faithless!

"What's the matter, dear?"

Her lip quivered, but her far-apart eyes were stern.

"Sit down."

He drew over a low rocker and sat with his arm about her, but she drew away.

"Don't touch me. I'm going to tell you what's the matter."

He rested his elbows on his knees and ran his

fingers through his hair, while she sat very erect, her shoulders raised, her eyes fixed on the neat unlighted kindlings.

"Glen Bruce cares for me, Jerry . . . loves me, I mean."

"Has the damned hypocrite been making love to you?"

"Not in your sense of the word," she said harshly.

"But you don't care a snap of your finger for him!" Jerry held her by the shoulders, as if he would shake her.

"Yes, I do; I care a great deal for him. He represents a whole lot in my life. Through him I have immediate entrance to a career that has always been my ambition. We've got a lot in common, we're very congenial, and the more I'm with him, the more I enjoy his society." Daphne was surprised by her depth of feeling.

"If you're trying to make me jealous, you've succeeded; now, what the devil is the object?" He leaned over her, his gaze frightened.

"It's this, Jerry," her wide-apart eyes looked unflinchingly into his. "Glen told me what I meant to him and we have agreed that I cannot be seeing him any more—"

"Oh, well, as for that," he breathed a sigh and smiled slightly, "I'm not a jealous monster, am I? I can trust you, Daphne darling."

She shook her head, the soft brown curls over her ears fluttered.

"We are building our marriage on a keg of gunpowder, and you know it. Neither of us can afford to play with fire. *Neither* of us, Jerry."

"You mean by that . . . ?"

"I saw you caressing Eleanor's foot under the table to-night."

"Oh!" He hid his face in his hands; only his mouth showed, red lips caught between white teeth, lips that kissed so easily, so passionately.

Daphne, watching, was filled with panic.

"Jerry, it's not too late? You're not her lover already?" she implored.

"God no!" He raised his eyes to hers and she was positive he spoke the truth.

She checked the sudden hope that prompted her to throw herself forgivingly into his arms. Glen had said it was the beginning, she must not let it also be the end.

"Tell me exactly what she means to you, Jerry. How often have you seen her? Every Friday the three months we were away?"

He hid his eyes in his hands again, and nodded.

A new possibility presented itself to Daphne.

"And how often since?"

In the silence that followed, Daphne edged away from him, toward the unlit fire as if it could warm her chilled spirits.

"About once a week—for lunch." He suddenly sprang to his feet and stood before her, hands in trousers pockets, elbows out, "I don't love her, Daphne; I swear I don't. It's just been an innocuous flirtation until to-night; then I realized the danger. There isn't any need of your jumping on me, Daphne, because I put the brakes on myself. I swore, as I walked out of the apartment-house, an hour ago, that I was through forever! The whole world suddenly changed, thousands of tons fell from my shoulders!"

He sat down on the floor as he used to sit in Eden, legs crossed, looking up into her face, his eyes shining, his manner eager.

"I was suddenly free, darling! I suppose I had really been afraid I might get to love her. We were both of us on the border. Do you know what I sang, driving up Fulton Street? 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow!' I reverberated in the sedan until I thrilled. I didn't want to love her, precious; I want only you."

"Jerry, how can you flirt when you know what it means?" she cried, drawing back from his outstretched arm. "I've been through hell! I wanted to pound her stupid face! And after you'd gone off with her and I felt as if you'd gone out of my life forever . . ." Sobs of rage choked her. Her anguish had turned into fury, as it often does when the danger is past.

"Don't, Daphne, darling! I can't bear it. I know I've been utterly abominable, but I've never forgotten I was holding your honor, my love! Don't be afraid; I'll keep straight. I simply *have* to." He knelt before her, holding her hand so tight she could not draw away. "There was one second as I was saying good night to Eleanor that I was suddenly crazy for her." He swept his hair back with an abrupt jerk of his head and leaned closer. "But I only had to remember that I *must* be faithful! It was that thought which made me promise myself I was through with her."

Joy flooded Daphne's tortured soul. Her plan was not a failure! It was holding Jerry true to her!

"You'll really definitely break with her, Jerry?"

"I'll never see her again, I swear, Daphne, I'll write to her to-night and tell her so."

For a moment they gazed into each other's eyes; she sitting on the low stool, her white-net dress looped about her, he on his knees before her, an old-fashioned valentine. Then, with a trembling smile of forgiveness, she let him crush her to his heart.

## Chapter XVII

IN the light of calmer reasoning, Daphne felt a long way from victory. Jerry's letter to Eleanor, stating that it was best he should not see her again, admitted her hold on him, and Daphne was afraid Eleanor's love of admiration would make her refuse to give him up without a struggle. She lived in terror of the time when the heroics of his act, like the chanting of the doxology, died into faint echoes, and temptation again assailed him.

If he was five minutes late from business she would gaze up the street, breathless with fright, fighting back the memory of her mother. History must not be repeated. Yet life without Jerry—impossible! It would be taking the steel structure out of the Eiffel Tower. All her thoughts, her hopes, her ambitions were centered on him. Through the day she filed away every little incident to relate at dinner; during the night she never half wakened without feeling for his encircling arm; and ahead of them . . . Why, ahead of them was all of life! They hadn't really begun yet! He must be true to her!

When he finally came striding down the block,



hat tipped to one side, head tilted, her heart would soar with renewed faith, and in the intensity of her relief she would whisper: "He's mine! I'll never doubt him again!"

In an effort to tide him over his temptation, she studied her body, as last year she had studied the house, and did all she could to make herself alluring. She resorted to perfumes that made one's eyes close with dreamy pleasure, sat through the ordeal of a permanent wave, and bought quantities of chiffon underwear, in all the rainbow hues. Jerry, with charming marital annoyance, protested at their sheerness. "My Lord, Daphne! you might as well wear nothing!" But she noticed that he usually ended his tirades in a rapturous kiss. When she came down to the living-room one evening in a pink lounging costume, a panne-velvet jacket and satin trousers, he held her at arm's length and drank her in adoringly.

"My savage lawyer wife! You're just like a doll! Look, in those flat-heeled slippers you only come to my shoulder! You cute, bewitching love!"

Down in her secret heart she loathed these maneuvers. They were the desperate appeal of a frightened mistress: but what else was she?

Grace had the grippe as she had predicted and spent a month at Bramton, so that the lovers, uninterrupted even by the telephone, waited before the crackling fire until Hannah lumbered up to

bed, after which Daphne would curl up on Jerry's lap, while he read aloud.

Were it not for the icy fear that chilled everything she did, life for Daphne would have been ideal.

Then, as suddenly as Eleanor had intruded into Daphne's plan, she withdrew. Less than four weeks after the dinner party, Grace telephoned from Bramton. "For Heaven's sake, Daphne, what do you suppose is the latest? Eleanor's sold her apartment, furniture and all, and to-day she starts for California!"

"Not for good!" pleaded Daphne.

"Absolutely! Isn't that a skunky trick, after she got me to buy the apartment in her house and everything? I'm simply furious!"

A week later Daphne received a very short note from Pasadena. With tears of sympathy rolling down her cheeks, she read in Eleanor's ornamental handwriting:

DEAR DAPHNE:

I thought it was best to run away. It is the first thing I have ever done that I'm proud of and I hope you appreciate it.

Yours truly,  
ELEANOR

With Eleanor's departure, Jerry and Daphne changed places. She became the buoyant victor—

why not?—while Jerry perpetually struggled against smothering depression. He grew increasingly restless; no longer could he read contentedly before the fire, but every night they rode over to New York and dropped into a musical comedy or danced at one of the larger hotels. Daphne's work at Columbia suffered from lack of interest and late hours. She flunked two of the mid-terms and saw little prospect of getting her A.B. that spring. But what did it matter? She remembered Jerry's contention in the woods. "Nothing matters but our love, Daphne, darling." He had been right and their love would be victorious.

One morning, shortly after the Christmas holidays, as Daphne was struggling to keep her mind on the German vocabulary,—for her snap subject was the most troublesome,—Grace telephoned, imploring her to drop in on her way to college.

Catching the note of tragedy, Daphne guiltily wondered if Grace had learned of the infatuation of Eleanor and Jerry for each other. But the minute she saw the teary, swollen face, she knew the trouble must be personal.

"What is the matter, Grace?" she asked sympathetically. "Archie's not sick?"

"No . . . it's nothing. Florence never showed up this morning and I was feeling blue."

Daphne tossed her books on the hard divan that blocked the windows, and, slipping out of her

old raccoon coat, sent it flying on top of them. Relief made her gay.

"All right, what can I do to change your color? Red up—is that the idea? Done the breakfast dishes yet?"

"Heavens! don't talk about food!" wailed Grace. "The very thought makes me want to die. If I hadn't felt so frightful, I'd never have sent for you. You haven't any more sympathy than—"

"Sympathy for what, Grace? What's the matter?"

"Heavens! don't be so dumb! Whatever is the matter with a bride—especially one who marries a stupid dear like Archie?"

"You mean you're going to have a baby?"

"The middle of May." Grace sank down on a high-backed needle-point chair, weeping, the antithesis of Niobe.

"Oh, Grace, isn't it lovely!" Tears flooded Daphne's far-separated eyes; she felt all soft and wistful inside.

"Lovely! What's lovely about it? You're so smart, you won't have a baby for four years, and I can't go for four months."

"Just wait until you have a squizzly little bundle in your arms, Grace, all sweet and powdery, and see how you feel about it. I'm going to knit a sweater! Lie down and I'll do the dishes."

"If you're so blamed enthusiastic, why don't you

have one of your own?" Grace protested, following her into the kitchen and sitting on the white kitchen chair, her head against the sash curtains, her eyes closed to shut out the view of orange skins and coffee grounds. "You pose an awful lot, Daphne."

Daphne slipped Archie's few dishes into the pan and turned on the faucet. If Grace knew what a baby symbolized to Jerry and her! She looked over at her sister's profile, sallow against the white glare of the court. How pitiless Grace would be in her condemnation! Might she be justified? What could be a stronger bond to keep a man faithful than his own baby? Jerry a father! She could picture him leaning over the bassinet, in hushed awe. He could make the commonplace wonderful; their baby would be a miracle of heaven! Then she remembered her father. Love for his child had not kept him faithful. She thumped the soap-shaker into the water—a judge with his gavel. Her plan was working. She wouldn't become a sentimental weakling.

"I'm not posing, Grace, when I say I envy you. I shan't even wait to get my law degree—"

"Oh, you make me perfectly sick with your high-brow notions! . . . Speaking of law degrees, what's become of our legal friend, I wonder? I asked him up to Bramton while we're there for the Christmas holidays, but he refused. I sup-

pose he has his own set in Pelham. Heavens! there doesn't seem to be a decent soul left in Brooklyn. I wish Archie had gotten a call in Westchester."

"Cheer up, Grace; there'll soon be another Meeks to add to the élite. Do you want a boy or a girl?"

"Neither," groaned Grace.

By March, Jerry had calmed his restlessness, and settled into an apathetic peace, which proclaimed to Daphne that her victory was won! With her triumph, her maternal instincts, awakened by Grace, sought perpetually for recognition. Jerry had proved himself; why should she be a Shylock and demand the whole bargain? Why not three years, instead of four?

In this state of mind, she was visited by Kitty, home for a week with her six-months-old daughter. Kitty had centered all her hero-worship on her baby, and no longer envied any one on earth, for there was but one Bubbles, and she possessed her.

"Isn't she wonderful, Daphne?" The mother sat in the low rocker in Daphne's bedroom, buttoning a rumpled silk blouse. Her black skirt was stained, the coarse fiber-silk stockings clumsily darned above run-over heels, but her heavy face had lost its discontent. She gazed in ecstasy at the plump, satiated baby. "I hate the thought of weaning her. I'll feel as if she don't need me any more."



"If I didn't jounce her, or anything, might I hold her just a little while?"

"Sure; I don't go by the books. They're only babies once and I say enjoy 'em. See how she holds her fists over her head? That means she's healthy."

Daphne strained the armful to her passionately. What would it feel like to have her own and Jerry's baby in her arms like this, to watch the pink eyelids open and see Jerry's blue eyes looking up at her! She gazed across the room to the door leading into the nursery. Some day that door would be opened!

"If you're tired of holding her, I can just lay her in the back room to sleep," offered Kitty.

"No, not there," Daphne answered sharply. She could not think of any baby being in that room ahead of her own. Then she added in explanation, "It isn't furnished yet; we're saving it, Kitty, for our nursery."

"Honestly?" the girl tilted the rocker forward. "When?"

"Oh, no time . . . two years. I haven't graduated from college yet, you know."

Kitty wrinkled her thick nose scornfully.

"You don't realize what you're missing, Daphne! I never was one of those hundred-percent mother-girls. I was savage as a panther when I knew I was in for it, and maybe I didn't



lead poor Edgar a chase! . . . I wish he was going to be in port, Daphne, you'd like him. . . . But there's something about kids—maybe it's their helplessness—that just gets you!"

Jerry came home before she left, and they had a confidential, serious talk. He it was who tucked the ends of the blue bunny-blanket about the baby's feet when Kitty was finally ready to cross the street.

"I'm awfully glad to see you so happy, Kitty," Daphne said as she saw her to the door. She felt as if their happiness were bound together, and the other girl's successful marital venture boded well for herself. "When I go downtown, I'm going to look around for a blue-silk coat and bonnet for Miss Bubbles."

"Now, Daphne, don't you do anything of the kind!" protested Kitty, but maternal greed made her add, "If you're determined to, pink's her color." She shifted the baby to her shoulder, and lowered her voice: "Your man is a winner, Daphne! It isn't only his looks, it's his interest in things. He didn't ask me how Bubbles got her name, just to be polite, he was really curious. Most men don't care for anything beyond themselves. I know, I've seen a lot of them. Well, ta-ta! I'll drop in again before I leave."

Daphne slowly mounted the stairs, wondering if that were Jerry's charm and his curse; he was

too much interested in life! When she returned to the living-room, he was looking out at the frozen garden, smoking furiously at the brier pipe he had bought from Uncle Robert.

"Cute baby, Jerry."

"Yes. Doesn't the garden look little and unpromising in winter! When are we going to have dinner? Are there any melodramas in town? I want a bang-up zip-dinger for a change."

Daphne sighed inaudibly. Jerry was having another restless spell. She went over and slipped an arm through his, but he broke away by reaching for his pipe, then slumped into a chair. "Lord! I'm tired!"

"Hadn't you better rest, dear?"

"Rest?" He sat up and scowled. "Hardly."

"But you're working awfully hard. Easter vacation begins in four weeks, dear; couldn't we spend a few days at Bramton?"

"The fact that it's your vacation, Daphne, doesn't make it a business holiday. The whole world doesn't happen to go to school, you know."

"There's no earthly need of your being disagreeable, Jerry, especially after I had such a nice compliment about you from Kitty." She was half angry, half cajoling.

He hammered out his pipe on the hearth and stuffed it into his pocket.

"Are you going to look for a show or aren't you?"

"I don't know," Daphne raised her chin impudently. "Just how many slaves have you on your plantation, Mr. Veerland? This one doesn't like your tone."

"Will you please find a play with two murders and a hold-up?—and I'll apologize like a slave-owner and a gentleman."

She could tell he was making an effort to check his irritability and, giving him a forgiving smile, she perched on the arm of his chair.

"From the marks I'm getting in my studies, it doesn't look as if I'll make my degree this spring, Jerry." She ran her fingers through his hair and watched it fall in russet lines, worried over the cause of his irritation. He had not been like this for weeks. Had Archie's new air of supreme importance, and this visit of the wee Bubbles stirred his paternal instincts, until he felt, as she did, that they were cheating themselves?

She whispered, close to his ear.

"I'm getting awfully jealous of these stuck-up mothers, Jerry. . . . Only one year more!" When he made no comment, she asked gently, "Think I'm a beast, holding out for the full time, dear?"

"Of course not. I can see the logic of your plan."

How glibly he said, "Your plan," as if it were a

housekeeping schedule. Had he any conception of the misery it had caused her? Did he suppose she could forget her old-fashioned training?

"If . . . if you did think so, Jerry, I'd be ready to shorten it."

Instead of enthusiastically accepting her offer, Jerry, his expression tense, rose abruptly and strode over to the front window.

"Don't talk like that now, Daphne, of all times!"

A new fear stabbed her.

"Jerry," she breathed in agony, "is there any one else since Eleanor?"

"God, *no*, Daphne! There never will be."

"But you said 'Now, of all times!' What did you mean?"

"Mean? I didn't mean anything. Must I weigh my words like a witness? . . . Listen, Daphne. You've got me by the strongest tie in life. That's what we want, isn't it?"

She sat limp on the arm of the empty chair, a victim to her own logic. "The strongest tie . . ." After all, was holding one's morals as hostage such a clever plan? Oh, she didn't want to hold Jerry by anything but love!

"Isn't that right?" he demanded.

"I suppose so, Jerry. . . . Where's the evening paper?"

## Chapter XVIII

JERRY's disposition was once more as unsettled as the March weather through which they were passing, with its stinging sleet and spring sunshine. When Daphne again mentioned a few days' vacation during Easter week, he flew into a towering rage. Did she suppose business was a kindergarten? Did she imagine he could pull down eighteen thousand a year by playing?

"But what's the sense of being a slave to money?" she demanded, more provoked by his pallor than his pettishness.

"Money means success. . . . Now don't start any damned ethical discussion about the real values of life, for I don't feel like listening to it." He kicked back the dining-room chair and stamped out to the garden, letting in a slice of cold air.

In a few minutes he was back, cradling the first daffodil in his slender palm.

"My peace-offering, Daffodowndilly. I never see anything yellow that my heart doesn't burn for you."

"Won't you make our little vacation your

peace-offering, darling? You know you've been working too hard."

He nodded, and then ran his fingers through his coppery hair.

"Just from Thursday until Monday," she coaxed.

"I . . . I've an appointment on Friday I must keep."

Friday . . . She remembered the Fridays last summer! Thank God! that worry was over!

"Come in to town for that day, if you really have to."

He scowled into the square-bowl pipe he was stuffing with tobacco.

"Yes, I might do that. Possibly I could change the appointment."

They got an early start Thursday morning and were motoring up the drive as Mrs. Churchill, her arms full of lilies, was climbing into her car.

"I . . . I didn't suppose you'd get here quite yet," she apologized, looking from her guests to the flowers. "I can take these later, just as well."

"We'll go with you, Mother," volunteered Jerry, kissing her.

The small eyes gleamed with pleasure and Mrs. Churchill confided to Daphne as they were riding toward the cemetery, "He certainly is a dear boy!"

Daphne nodded eagerly.

"He's a love and a lamb, when he isn't working too hard. These few days are going to do him a world of good."

Her prophecy was correct. Although he spent Friday in town, the two days' horseback-riding and loafing seemed to unknot his nerves. The irritability, the high tension, the sharpness were gone.

With the coming of spring he was her old lover, more tender, more solicitous than ever. He bought her quantities of dresses, met her on Fifty-seventh Street to select her hats, brought home great round boxes of candy filled with her favorite varieties.

"You'll absolutely spoil me, darling," she protested.

"I almost believe I would . . . if I could," he answered seriously. "That's your only fault, Daphne; you're too good!"

She wondered how many people would agree with him, if they knew the whole truth.

Archibald Meeks, Jr., with some of his father's tantalizing slowness, was born two weeks late, on the last Saturday of May. The next day, while the exultant father gave out hymns and offered such minor prayers as fell to the lot of the assistant minister, Daphne and Jerry hurried down to the Brooklyn Hospital.

They were only allowed to wave to Grace, who



lay in bridal splendor, showing no evidence of last night's ordeal.

"Go see Junior," she called. "He's the image of his paternal grandfather, but he's awful cute, just the same."

A fleckless nurse guarded the nursery, and eyed Daphne's new powder-blue coat as if it were a filthy gunny-sack.

"You can't come in, in street clothes . . . germs."

"But we've simply got to see the little rascal," pleaded Jerry.

Her severity turned into a radiant smile.

"All right. I'll bring him to the door."

Why did all women smile at Jerry like that, Daphne lamented; but her heart told her the answer.

As she looked into the wire basket, at the infuriated baby,—his tiny fists clenched, his up-raised arms scarcely reaching above his bald, pink head,—instinctively her hand sought Jerry's.

"Isn't he wonderful, Daphne! How does he know enough to cry? I've never seen a new baby before; I didn't know they could be so little!"

"You're his uncle?" the nurse asked amicably.

Daphne felt his hand twitch in hers and she hastened to lie for him.

"Yes. Can't you imagine how he'll spoil him?"

Strolling up Lafayette Avenue in silence, they passed a big Presbyterian church, its imposing spire pointing in calm majesty toward the Christian's symbolic goal. Through the stained-glass window sounded a vibrant organ and thin congregational singing. Jerry joined in, as they slowly passed:

"Now hear me while I pray,  
Take all my guilt away,  
Oh, let me from this day  
Be wholly Thine!"

She wondered if he blamed her for his guilt. Never had she hated her "plan" so much as since Jerry's confessed acceptance of it.

"Mother used to rock me to sleep with that hymn, Daphne. I can remember her breast rising and falling as she sang, all her love in her voice!"

"Yes, Jerry?" Her eyes were dim. How that mother would despise her. "Afterward, when we've made good, and aren't such hypocrites, let's go to church. Want to? At worst, we're only ignorant agnostics, not atheists."

"Funny your suggesting it. That's just what I was thinking. I often have a picture of you and me going to Sunday-school, back home. We each have a youngster by the hand—our son and daughter."

She waited. Was he going to ask her to shorten the probation? But he sank into another silence.

Daphne ignominiously flunked at Barnard, passing in only one of her three subjects; but it didn't really matter; she had another year to squander and she might as well go on with college, for she wouldn't start her law course until the last baby was in kindergarten—a matter of ten years, at least. Jerry was right: mothering was the biggest job in the world!

They spent the three summer months in Bramton. Jerry only went to business the first four days of the week, staying in town Wednesday night. How different from the Friday nights of last year, when he had been under the power of Eleanor's beauty! Daphne breathed with deep contentment. Eleanor deserved a lot of credit.

The Meeks, too, spent the summer with Mrs. Churchill and the happy mother was unable to express adequately her appreciation to the girls for all the confusion they made. Especially was this true of young Archibald, whose demands were in inverse ratio to his size.

Daphne and Jerry took up golf, joining a small club at Greenwich, ten miles across country, and three days a week cantered over on Napoleon and L'Aiglon. Soon they reached the stage, enjoyed by all beginners, when their drives sometimes soared from the tee like an arrow from an Indian's bow, once in a while their mashie shots dropped dead to the pin, and at rare intervals

they sank a ten-foot putt, whereupon they believed that with a little more practice they would be able to make their best shots a habit.

At Jerry's earnest behest, Daphne agreed to postpone their return to Brooklyn until the end of September, whereupon Grace also advanced their date of departure and Mrs. Churchill's small eyes shone at the prospect of four additional weeks of slavery.

"Our last day!" grumbled Jerry, as they swung into their saddles to make the ride home in the sweet twilight. "Why do all delightful things have to end?"

"This isn't ended," contradicted Daphne, waving her crop in the direction of the club-house. She was rejoiced to be moving home on the morrow. It was four months since she and Jerry had shared *their* chair before the cheery fire. "We'll come out to Bramton for the week-ends and play golf all next month."

"It won't be the same," he growled, with a show of his old irritation, and kicking Napoleon's glossy black flank, he pulled him into a canter, which the smaller horse immediately imitated. At the dirt road that led into Miller's woods he called over to Daphne. "Let's stop at Eden, I want to ask you something."

Wondering, she followed, and in single file they galloped through the dim woods.

"God! I love this place!" he breathed reverently, as he held the bushes for her to pass through.

"What . . . what is it, Jerry?"

"I . . . I promised I wouldn't ask, Daphne but . . ." He had locked his arms and stood with his riding-boots well separated, in a virile, masterful way. "It's just this: I've a chance to go to France to get material for an olive-grove catalogue."

So that was it; he wanted to go abroad and leave her at home. She looked at the brook, leaden in the shadows. Well, other men went on business; why not he?

"Sounds like a good chance, Jerry."

"Yes, it is. Clark is crazy to go if I don't. What do you say, Daffy? Want to come along?"

She opened her eyes with joy and gave a little gasp. "Me, too?"

"You don't suppose I'd go without you?"

"Then why your solemnity, old darling? Of course I'm mad to go. When?"

"Hold on a second. This is the hitch. There are passports and visés, you know. There'll be a fuss if you sign your own name and . . ." With a couple of rapid strides he was standing over her, his voice vibrant with emotion: "I know I promised not to ask you, darling, but won't you use that damned license?"

She was in his arms, clinging to him, hugging him, strangling him.

"Oh Jerry! I've only been waiting for you to ask me!"

"Best little pal in the world!" he breathed.

Riding home, they made their plans. Archie should marry them Wednesday night, with Glen and Grace as witnesses.

"I think I shall rather enjoy telling Grace; it'll bump her out of herself for a minute."

Jerry's laugh ran through the trees.

"One thing: our secret will be safe with her. And if I didn't have old Archie tie the knot I'd never feel it was genuine . . . good old scout."

While Grace was giving the baby his last bottle, that night, Daphne dropped her bomb.

"We're having a little dinner party Wednesday night; can we count on you and Archie?"

Grace looked about the room at the half-packed trunk and general confusion of packing.

"If there's anything left of me."

Daphne toyed with the door-knob. After all, the confession was no fun. If it were not for Jerry's desire to have Archie perform the ceremony, she would never tell Grace.

"Sure the night's all right for Archie?" she temporized.

"I guess so; he's due any minute and he can speak for himself."

"Well, we want him, that's one sure thing." She laughed nervously, and carefully closed the door. "He's to marry us, Grace."

Grace's large eyes bulged.

"Marry you?"

"Yes. Jerry and I have been trying it out, and we're ready to make it holy and legal and every other old thing."

"You mean to say you've been living together for three years without being married?" Grace demanded, holding the bottle like a weapon and forgetting the baby until his wails reminded her of her duty.

"Yes, my idea; but of course we intended to marry, ultimately."

"Daphne Churchill, I think you're perfectly disgusting! If that's all college did for you, you might much better have stayed home. My own sister! I can't believe it!"

"Don't try. By Wednesday we'll be tied in as orthodox a manner as you and Archie."

"Never let Mother find out," breathed Grace. "It would kill her!"

"Barring me from my own room?" queried Archie, opening the door. "Nothing the matter with Junior?"

"No. I suppose I can tell him, Daphne? He'll have to know anyway."

Daphne nodded.



"Close the door again, Archie," ordered his wife. "I'm ashamed you've married into such a family. And don't you dare breathe a word of it to your mother, or I'll never tell you anything again."

"I'm afraid I shan't see her for a couple of years, Grace, if that's any encouragement." He smiled quizzically, and closed the door. "Now, what is it?"

"Daphne and Jerry aren't married."

He frowned and turned his pale eyes toward his sister-in-law.

"I gave Jerry four years to prove himself in, Archie, with the promise that I'd marry him if he made good. But I feel that he's already proved himself, and we want you to marry us Wednesday night. . . . Now, if you'll please release this publican and sinner . . ." She was tired of being an object of scorn and wanted to get back to Jerry.

But Archie held her as she would have passed him.

"Just a minute, until I get this straight. You want to be married Wednesday night. . . . Are you sure that's wise?"

"Well, for Heaven's sake! You're some minister!" expostulated Grace, in amazement.

"Not at all. Daphne and Jerry's love is one of

God's miracles, but if God can work better through a common-law marriage than a ceremonial one, doesn't it seem—"

"You're the dearest Reverend that ever lived!" Daphne cried in a burst of sudden affection. "But it wasn't even that. In a way, Grace is right: I haven't a moral or a legal leg to stand on. But I didn't do it to be nasty. I did it to help keep Jerry straight."

"For Heaven's sake! How did you figure that out?" demanded her sister, taking the empty bottle from the sleeping baby and standing up, defiant.

"You'd never understand," Daphne answered curtly. Then, feeling that Archie deserved an explanation, she added, "I knew that by giving Jerry everything, even my honor, he couldn't be faithless."

Archie looked at her pityingly.

"But, Daphne dear, a man doesn't care more for the honor of his . . . his . . ."

"Mistress," she prompted.

He nodded.

". . . than he does for that of his wife. Wasn't there a bit of sophistry about your argument?"

She wouldn't tell him how it had saved Jerry from Eleanor, so she allowed her case to go unproved.

"What's the good of talking, now? If you'll agree to marry us Wednesday, I'll plan a wedding dinner with Grace and Glen Bruce as witnesses."

"For Heaven's sake! You aren't going to tell him, too," groaned Grace.

"He's known for a year."

"So that's why he wouldn't have anything to do with us! I don't wonder."

And again Daphne scored defeat when she might have had a victory.

"We're just a bit upset, but we'll be more charitable when we've calmed down . . . eh, Grace?" Archie apologized for her.

"Nothing but the fact that Daphne is my sister would ever induce me to speak to her again," protested his wife.

Daphne and Jerry lived in the white heat of anticipatory glory for the next three days and even Grace forgot her scorn when she heard of the approaching trip to France. She wanted to order several things, and there wasn't any sense in being on bad terms with one's purchasing agent.

In answer to her note to Glen, Daphne received a telegram.

Expect me. Your happiness is one of my greatest desires.  
Glen.

Dear Glen! Perhaps he would give her a clerkship when she was finally ready for it, it would be

so many years off. And she smiled tenderly as she thought of the empty nursery. Next year this time it might be occupied!

At home, Wednesday, she sat at her desk in the big living-room, checking up her list for dinner. The hors d'œuvres were ordered; the soup Hannah took care of; turkey, et cetera, could be checked off. Candy? She frowned, and poked the point of the pencil through the paper. Had she asked Jerry to bring home some of those thin peppermints? She rested her cheek on her knuckles and tried to remember. They had fooled a lot over the good-by.

"Last time I'll ever kiss my little wanton," he had said, hugging her until she couldn't breathe.

"Hush! Remember Hannah."

"I can't think of any one but you, darling. Going to give me a nice wedding present? I have a peacherino for you—diamonds and platinum and everything."

"Don't tell; I want to be surprised. Be home early?"

"Sure thing . . . by four, anyway."

There hadn't been a word about peppermints in that. No, she had forgotten to tell him, and he knew where to get the creamiest wafers, in beautiful pastel shades.

She reached for the telephone pad and looked up his number; not a dozen times had she called

him at the office. She had been afraid to think of the women who shared his business hours. Now she scoffed at her lack of faith and gave the number with ringing assurance.

"Elziva Press," snapped an efficient voice.

"I want to speak to Mr. Veerland."

"Hold the wire and I'll connect you with his room."

Another feminine voice, softer, more refined:

"Mr. Veerland's secretary."

"I want to speak to Mr. Veerland," Daphne repeated.

"Hold the wire, please. . . . Mr. Veerland, Mrs. Dundee on the phone."

Daphne gave Jerry her message in one breath: "Bring home a pound of cream peppermints for dinner, Jerry. Good-by." She snapped the receiver into the arm of the telephone and sat back in her chair, staring into blackness. Mrs. Dundee! *Mrs. Dundee!*

## Chapter XIX

DAPHNE sat motionless, her elbows propped on the desk and her face hidden in her hands, with just the tip of her tilted nose protruding between them. Three quadrangles of sunshine, filled with dancing motes, were suddenly extinguished by a cloud, as if they realized the somberness of the occasion.

Downstairs the knocker thumped, footsteps click-clacked across the tile, there was a heavy tread on the creaking stairs, and Hannah, holding a long florist's box, presented Daphne with a chunky canvas book.

"I guess they're pretty grand, by the size," argued the faithful servant, as her mistress scratched her name.

Daphne waited until the maid had reluctantly departed, before slipping off the green tape. Inside were a rich damp mass of American Beauties with a card from Jerry: "To my little wife, who can never stem my love."

She set the box on a little table between the windows. A casket! The heavy odor of floral pieces! Undertakers in black gloves, snapping

open camp chairs! Her father's funeral . . . now Jerry's!

Hannah returned to satisfy her curiosity, and gazed at the flowers with the same interest she would have exhibited for the last remains.

"Beautiful, ain't they? They might be artificial."

Daphne tore off the card.

"Keep them downstairs in water until Mr. Veerland comes home. He'll arrange them." She must be free of the odor.

*Mrs. Dundee on the phone!* Eleanor was not in California! How long had she been East? How often did she see Jerry? Why always think the worst? But what else was there to think?

She walked up and down the room, tapping the floor with her heel. What should she do? She mustn't accuse Jerry until she knew. Suppose he were innocent. *Suppose?* He must be! He was going to marry her to-night. Jerry would never deceive her like that. She paused before the upholstered chair they had both occupied so often, and laid her cheek against the back. She must believe in him . . . but why was Eleanor's name known in his office?

She straightened, shoulders high, desirous of confronting her enemy and knowing the truth. How locate her? She telephoned the superintendent of the Pierrepont Street apartment-house and when he gave her Eleanor's Pasadena address,



Daphne's heart leapt with hope. She had misunderstood Jerry's secretary! The name had been Bundee or Mundee; Eleanor was still in California. Then, remembering she had deposited at their bank, Daphne called up the cashier, and received the prompt information: "Mrs. Dundee's last address is 757 Park Avenue, New York."

Eleanor was in New York.

Yet there must be an explanation. Daphne was mad with impatience to tear the truth out of Eleanor. She would go to her immediately and promise, if they were lovers, to give Jerry up. Eleanor would take him. There had always been something ruthless about her. Even as Daphne planned, she could not realize it was Jerry, her Jerry, she was offering to hand over to Eleanor. This was a nightmare. She would wake up. She must!

It was after twelve: hurry! hurry! However, she took time to put on the green coat dress and large black hat she and Jerry had bought yesterday. Eleanor should not think her a frump. She drew her hair over her ears, and smiled into Jerry's picture. She hadn't lost faith in him . . . not yet. "I'm not so beautiful as Eleanor, dear, but you said I'm the best pal in the world," she whispered.

The door-man at the Park Avenue apartment, who assisted Daphne out of the taxi, was more

elaborately braided than his Brooklyn predecessor, and Daphne noticed that the elevator was larger. She thought how envious Grace would be; then she marveled at herself. How could she think of Grace, or trifles like braided uniforms? Her whole life's happiness depended on the outcome of this meeting.

She pressed the electric button, her heart pounding crazily. How would Eleanor act, meeting her suddenly like this? But a trim maid in black satin and white organdie opened the door. Of course, absurd to think of Eleanor answering the bell.

Mrs. Dundee was out and would not return until four o'clock.

Daphne ran her finger around the brass push-button. Jerry expected to be home by four, to dress for his wedding! Wedding! Her chamois-gloved fingers curled into fists. She must stay and learn the truth . . . if there were to be any wedding!

The maid raised her eyebrows slightly at the idea of any one in such a busy city waiting two hours. She ushered her into a heavily furnished living-room, so dim that artificial light was necessary.

It occurred to Daphne that she might be able to learn all she needed from this domestic. Strange—one's code of ethics! She had deliberately broken

a tenet of morality for three years, yet she could not bring herself to bribe a servant.

The maid snapped on a few more lights and left her with a pile of magazines. Daphne picked up "Vogue" and kept her eyes glued on the pages, afraid to look about the room lest she see something of Jerry's. She read advertisements of kennels, military academies, new books; she skimmed social notes, fashion articles, interior decorating, beauty hints, and read on through the advertisements in the back. A cocoanut-cake in brilliant colors, advertising baking-powder, held her eye. Sunday nights, when Hannah was out, she and Jerry used to bake a cake, usually cocoanut. He loved to fuss about the kitchen; he contended that all men did. She smiled as she remembered the pleasure he took in beating the whites of eggs. "For the life of me, Daffy, I don't understand how that little bit of slimy stuff turns into a huge delicious cloud. How does it get that way?"

Her smile faded, her chin sagged, her eyes grew frightened. Suppose there were no more Sunday nights! Suppose this were the end of everything! She locked her hands and stared at the white-faced clock in the glass case. Nearly three. Her guests were coming at six; Jerry wanted the ceremony over before dinner. He had tickets for "Rose Marie" and afterward he and she were

spending the night at the Ritz, like regular bride and groom. She mustn't forget, on her way home, to stop at Dunhill's and buy Jerry a gold cigar-lighter, a gift that would be useful on the steamer, when they tramped the deck in the high wind. She could feel herself snuggling close to him, her man, her husband. For one exalted second she paused on the crest of oblivious happiness: Jerry, France . . . their baby! Then, with a dizzy plunge, she remembered why she was here.

Eleanor returned almost on the hour, very elegant in a taupe wrap lavishly trimmed with mole. Her greeting was as calm and well poised as if Daphne had come on invitation.

"My dear, how sweet of you to hunt me up! I hired this awful hutch for a couple of months while I do my fall shopping. I can't endure Western styles. Several times I was on the point of phoning you, but under the circumstances . . . you understand?"

Daphne nodded, but she wondered if she really did. Was Eleanor telling the truth? How could she boldly demand, "Eleanor, is Jerry your lover?"

Tossing her wrap over a chair, Eleanor sat on the taffeta davenport beside her guest and they discussed polite trivialities—winter fashions, new plays, Archibald Junior—until Daphne's hands grew clammy and her face burned. She was get-

ting nowhere, and the gilt clock, ticking twice to the second, reminded her that guests were coming at six. She must force the issue.

"Have you chanced to see Jerry, Eleanor?" Daphne's question boomed in her ears; she could hear her voice vibrate through the room and she cleared her throat, with a little apologetic cough.

Eleanor's pansy eyes did not so much as quiver as she answered, in surprise:

"No indeed, Daphne! I thought you understood by my letter . . ."

All Daphne's scattered happiness, that had poised ready for flight, came tumbling and hurling itself upon her. She had been utterly, exquisitely wrong!

"Oh Eleanor!" She pushed back her large hat and rubbed her forehead with the back of her hand, fighting off hysterics, struggling to contain her joy without shrieking. "You can't imagine how I've suffered." With trembling lips she related the reason for her suspicion. "Of course, there are dozens of names that would sound like yours over the phone, Eleanor, but when I found out you were in New York . . . Don't let's talk about it. Instead, let me tell you, Eleanor, I think you were a perfect peach the way you acted last fall."

The clock ticked . . . ticked . . . ticked. Jerry was home, wondering about her. Daphne rose and

adjusted her hat. She was ashamed of her suspicion, yet she smiled as she thought that here was the first thing she would hide from her husband.

"You're a queer little girl," mused Eleanor, in her mature way. "What would you have done if . . . if I had seen Jerry, I wonder?"

Daphne shook her head and swallowed. She didn't have to consider that now, and she wasn't going to.

"May I telephone home, please, Eleanor?"

As Eleanor lighted the closeted booth in the foyer, Daphne added gratefully:

"Jerry and I are sailing for France on Saturday, Eleanor, and I'll bring you home a dozen pairs of gloves."

"Going to France?" Eleanor's voice sounded shrill, but central was demanding Daphne's number, so she shut herself in.

Jerry answered the phone.

"You, Daphne? Where are you?" His voice was frightened.

"In New York, Jerry darling. I was afraid you might worry. I'm going to buy a very special present and be home in an hour. Good-by, dear."

"Hurry, darling."

"Oh Jerry, tidy up the bedroom after you're dressed, in case I don't have time."

"Right-o, wife."

" 'By, *husband*."

She pulled out the light and returned to Eleanor, smiling until her broad teeth gleamed between her parted lips. Her eyes were very tender. "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the presence of God and these witnesses . . ." Did the marriage service ever mean more to any couple?

"Must you go?" lamented Eleanor. "Your gloves, dear—where did you leave them?"

"Oh yes, and my purse." Daphne laughed at her absent-mindedness, and turned to the small table. Her hand sprang back as if a snake were coiled on the chamois gloves, a rattlesnake ready to spring! Jerry's square brier pipe lay beside them. The pipe he had bought from Uncle Robert! She pressed her arms to her side and her head sagged slowly forward. Jerry's pipe. Eleanor had lied. She had seen Jerry. He came here! A man keeps his pipe in his home! Jerry lived here.

As the truth was slowly borne in upon her, it seemed to crush her out of herself, until she felt empty, like a deserted shell. A roaring sound in her ears, echoing down the hollow future. Jerry was faithless!

"What . . . what's the matter, Daphne?" Eleanor's voice seemed to come from the other end of a long tunnel.

Daphne pointed a trembling finger and sidled away.



"Oh, you should never have seen it!"

"Not see it? You know you deliberately put it there." There was no wrath in her tone. She was too far away from her body to register anger; she could just feel a faint curiosity. "Why did you lie at first, Eleanor?"

"For your sake, Daphne." Eleanor's white hand tapped the table, the delicate nails clicked. "You'll never appreciate what I've suffered on your account. I thought I would die in California. I believe I would have, if I had stayed. You don't know what love really means, and pray God you never shall."

Eleanor's face was snowy, save for the flush of rouge. Desperation gleamed in the deep-purple eyes, there was determination in the delicately curved chin. They were fighting in the open, at last, and she was out to win.

Daphne reached around the worn pipe for her silver-mesh bag, and walked toward the door without a word.

Anything she might have said would have been easier to endure; protestations, vituperations, or anguish might have been combated, but silence was irrefutable. Eleanor made the mistake of apologizing:

"It isn't as though I had stolen him, Daphne. If he had really been your husband, I never would have taken him; but I had as much right as

you . . . more. I love him enough to marry him."

"How do you know about our . . . marriage?" Daphne's dry lips could scarcely enunciate. She was collecting facts; later on she would be able to feel the effects; all poisons do not work instantaneously

"Jerry told me."

Daphne nodded. They were lovers; he told her everything. As she lay in his arms, in the dark, he whispered of all that had been sacred between him and Daphne. Perhaps they laughed softly at her blindness.

"I'm not a wicked woman," Eleanor pleaded, rubbing her hands as if she were washing them. "I'm only taking what you refused. You're a school-girl, with ideas and notions, and you do not understand—"

"Good-by, Eleanor." Daphne did not realize her rudeness. She left without another word, never to see Eleanor again.

## Chapter XX

BLOCK after block, with head bent under the big black hat, Daphne hurried down Park Avenue, mechanically dodging north-bound pedestrians.

Jerry . . . faithless!

Here was the end of her intellectual love-plan! She had counted on his honor to spare her this shame; but he had no honor! Oh, the whole plan had been fatuous, built on quicksand! Jerry's honor! Jerry's desires were all that counted with him!

Her thoughts became a medley of crashing discords; incidents blared as loudly, in her consciousness, as perfidy. He had lied, deceived, and all but trapped her into marriage. Only that morning had come his note, ". . . who can never stem my love," and all the time he was cheating her! Eleanor's lover! How long? The irony of his leaving that pipe—the one he had bought from Uncle Robert to learn about her. Nothing else he possessed would have been quite so mocking!

She passed the Park Lane Hotel and remembered how she had danced for hours, helping him forget Eleanor, who even then may have been his mistress.

She studied the great bronze clock at the end of the street, on the Grand Central Station. Her guests would arrive in half an hour. It was too dramatic, betrayed at the altar! Her young mouth curled scornfully. She should have brought Eleanor with her and substituted her for the bride!

Signaling a passing taxi, she gave her address. It was the last time she would ever call that her home. The last time! The words rang in her head, dolorously but without awakening her half-numbed sensibilities to their true meaning.

She removed the big hat and placing it on the seat beside her, indolently watched it slip forward and back, sliding on the slippery brown cushions with the motion of the cab, until an abrupt stop sent it shooting to the floor. How ridiculous to be sitting dry-eyed, watching a hat, when Jerry was faithless! Had she exaggerated her love for him? With her life in ruins, her home, her honor, her love wrecked, she could calmly watch a joggling hat! Where would she go after she had told Jerry of her discovery? To a hotel, or back to Bramton? Betrayed girls always went home to their mothers. But she wasn't betrayed; she had seduced Jerry.

Archie had said a man wouldn't care more for the honor of his mistress than for that of his wife. Glen had always thought the idea absurd.

The whole civilized herd would trample on her when the truth was known. Well, they were right! She had proved the failure of her theory. She did not care anything about the ruthless herd; but if there were enough of her inside of herself, if most of her feelings were not floating off in the intangible distance, she was sure she would feel very sorry for her mother. To have had a renegade husband was enough, without having an immoral daughter added. Her mother would never understand, but she would go on in her humble, ineffectual way, trying to shield her child as she had her husband.

The taxi sped over the Manhattan Bridge. Looking at the bulwark of office buildings, hazy in the twilight, Daphne thought of Jerry's protestations: "If each one of those lights represented some man's love for his wife all of them wouldn't equal my love for you." And she had not been able to hold him four short years!

Glen's car was parked before the door. The wedding-guests had arrived! She paid the taxi-driver, and, tucking her big hat under her arm, crossed the red cement courtyard and pounded the knocker—the knocker that really knocked.

Inside, Jerry's footsteps. She knew them well, quick couplets like an eager child's. The day they returned from their honeymoon she had waited for him like this. Now the cycle was completed.

They had established their home, lived in it, and to-night it was to be demolished.

Jerry flung open the door, just ahead of Hannah. He wore his dinner coat and his pale face looked like a reflection of the shirt-front.

"Well, you're some hostess!" he expostulated, half annoyed, half indulgent. His tawny hair slipped out of its combed order as he bent to kiss her. She drew away with a shiver, and he demanded sharply, "What's the matter, Daphne?"

She closed the door, leaning weakly against it until Hannah should have shut herself into the kitchen. With Jerry hovering over her, waiting to kiss her—the physical, tangible Jerry—scattered sensibilities returned and for an agonizing second she realized what this break meant to her. Life without Jerry! For over three years she had struggled with a single goal: to be legally, morally his. She had side-tracked her career and abused her conscience, fighting toward this end. Now, in the moment of her triumph, the whole foundationless structure crumbled before her eyes. Here was Jerry, waiting to plight his troth. To-night, when she would have been his without shame, he was torn out of her life forever! A glimpse of the ruin, the unutterable loneliness, more than the shame, made her crouch before him.

"What is the matter, Daphne?" he whispered fearfully. The high lights on his patent-leather

pumps caught her downcast eyes and she slowly raised her hunched shoulders, anguish turned into bitterness.

"Everything, Jerry," she answered with intensity. "I know about Eleanor."

They talked in strained whispers.

"She told you?"

"No, not exactly. I heard what your secretary said over the telephone, and . . ."

"But an hour ago, Daphne, you assured me everything was all right," he protested, as if he was being cheated.

"I was at Eleanor's. She had lied to me so well that I believed her . . . believed what I wanted to believe, and then . . ."

"And then . . ."

"Then I saw your pipe on the table."

"Good God!"

"So she's waiting for you and I'm going to Bramton. Now. Right away. They're all upstairs, aren't they? I'll leave you to tell them." She opened the door a few inches, but he slammed it with his foot.

"Don't be insane, Daphne. You can't go like that . . . it's impossible . . . can't be done . . . You don't understand."

"You're the second person who's told me that to-day. I do understand! There's nothing else to do. What's the use of a scene upstairs?"



"But don't make a scene, dearest."

"Don't call me 'dearest'; I can't stand it. It's only another of your lies."

"It is not, Daphne, I swear. I know I've been a beast, and all that. You can't call me anything I don't call myself. But all the same, I love you, I swear."

"That's not what I call love. It is worthless to me. Give it all to Eleanor." She pulled at the immovable door.

"You can't go, Daphne . . . not until we're married, at least. You can get a divorce then if you insist; but I won't have you on my conscience for the rest of my life."

It was the worst argument Jerry could have used. He wanted to marry her to free his contemptible conscience of his responsibility.

"You're worrying about that a little too late, Jerry." Her nostrils dilated, she tilted her chin in contempt.

"Don't you suppose I've always worried, especially lately? I haven't dared to think or it would have killed me."

"All right, now it's over. You can marry Eleanor and be sublimely respectable."

"Oh Daphne! don't be so hard! You know I don't want her. I want you! Even when she tempted me beyond endurance, I knew I could never love any one as I love you!" He was lean-

ing over her, talking intently; his red, kissable lips pale, so tightly were they drawn. "Don't suppose I didn't fight, Daphne. For months I struggled against my desire; then, the first part of March, when I was beginning to feel like a free man, I met her in New York by accident."

Accident? Daphne felt sure it was as deliberate as the pipe, but she made no comment.

"It was the day Kitty came with her baby, Daphne. Remember? The day you offered to give up your plan."

So that was the cause of his nerves! "To-day of all days," he had said.

"Yes, I remember," she agreed with stony calm.

"I was afraid, Daphne. Eleanor had told me how she had suffered for me all winter; she looked so delicate . . . Oh, you don't know what it is to be afraid of a power inside of you, stronger than yourself. I made the greatest mistake of my life. I told her of our relations to each other, expecting her to realize my responsibility. Instead, she claimed I was as much hers as yours. Before that, she, too, had tried to play fair, but from then on she showed me no mercy. For four weeks I held firm, until she threatened to go back to California. We were to have a final meeting on Friday—that Friday we were at Bramton for the Easter vacation. I fell asleep the night before,

confident of myself. I had won! I even pretended to myself that when I got to town I would call her up and break the luncheon date. . . . But I didn't, Daphne. . . . Dear God! if I only had!"

Daphne nodded understandingly.

"I was that way with you, Jerry. It's love."

He jerked up his head impatiently.

"It's not, I tell you. It's not the love I feel for you, Daphne."

"Thanks, I don't care for that sort of love. Now, may I go?"

"No!" His answer was rough. "Not until you believe my feeling for you is bigger, better . . . not until . . ."

Jerry mad about Eleanor when he had her! She couldn't endure the thought another second.

"Stop! I won't listen to you. You have no conception of real love. I wish to God I didn't, and I'm going to spend the rest of my life, if necessary, forgetting." She shrank away from him.

He realized he had failed.

"At least come up and tell Grace you're going. She's your sister; she has a right to know," he implored, running his fingers through his hair.

It was unnecessarily dramatic, Daphne decided, to dash off to her mother's without a stitch of clothing. She would go up and pack the few things she needed, for never again would she enter this house.

"Do you think Grace could induce me to change my mind?" she asked him scornfully, crossing the hall. "Oh Jerry, how stupid you are!" She dropped her hat on the red lacquered table and, tossing back her hair, went up to face her guests.

They were grouped about the fireplace, motionless, waiting for the result of the colloquy. A few tense phrases had mounted to the living-room, mutilated bits of tragedy.

Daphne stood on the top step, her head thrown back. The deep bang cast a dark shadow reaching nearly to her unflinching gray eyes. Her large mouth was set, her whole mien inexorable.

"Jerry wants me to tell you we are breaking partnership."

Jerry passed her and crossed to the three, his hands clenched tightly behind his back.

"I think you should know the truth: I've been a cad and a bounder. I've been faithless to Daphne, and she's entirely within her rights to turn me off, but if anybody could influence her—"

"No one had better make the mistake of trying," interrupted Daphne, icily. "Archie, when is the next train to Bramton?"

"Daphne!" Grace's voice was shrill with horror. "You simply can't walk out and leave Jerry like this, under the circumstances! Suppose it should get about that you had never been married!"

Glen had gone over to Daphne, and looked down at her wistfully, as if he longed to pick her up in his arms and carry her out of all her trouble. Now he turned and frowned at Grace.

"There's very little danger of that. We will get the divorce at White Plains. It can be arranged very simply."

"A divorce? How can one be divorced before one is married?" she demanded skeptically.

Glen's voice sounded as if he were at the end of his endurance:

"She is married, Grace, according to common law."

"No, I'm not," Daphne contradicted.

"Therefore she must marry me, don't you see?" Jerry begged, looking from one man to the other. "She can have the divorce then, but . . ."

Daphne had stood motionless at the head of the stairs, as unmoved by their excitement as a newel-post. Now she turned and started to mount the next flight. Half-way up she paused and said wearily:

"I haven't the slightest intention of marrying Jerry. I tell you I am leaving him. I'm going up to pack my bag."

"Could I come and have a little talk with you?" pleaded Archie. "Do you mind, Jerry?"

"I wish to God you would."

They mounted the stairs in silence. She pressed

the switch near the door, lighting the three lamps scattered about the big, soft-toned room. Jerry had forgotten her final instructions, and the confusion that always followed his dressing was worse than usual. His necktie dangled from the top of his high-boy, a collar coiled on a raspberry rug, his blue-cheviot suit hung over a chair, his brogues sprawled by the fireplace. Oh Jerry, Jerry! and he had promised to tidy up! This was just the mess he had made of her life.

Tightening her lips, she stood with her back to the bureau facing Archie. "All right, go ahead. But I positively refuse to go through the farce of marrying Jerry, that I may indulge in a fashionable divorce."

"No, no; that wasn't my theme, Daphne." He looked rather ridiculous in his evening clothes, which were old and tight. "Now I have you up here, Daphne, I feel frightfully . . . er . . . platitudinous. As a matter of fact, I'm more sorry for you . . . for you both, than I can express. I've prayed every night since your marriage that this thing would never happen. I didn't feel that it was inevitable . . . but that's ancient history. I want to plead Jerry's cause. He—"

She gripped the acorn handle of the drawer behind her.

"I tell you, Archie, there is nothing any one could say that would make me change my mind

one iota. I took Jerry in good faith, I gave him a trial, he failed, and that's the end of it."

"But love doesn't end like that, Daphne. Life might be simpler if it did."

"My love will end. I will starve it to death," she retorted bitterly. "I've lived with Mother. I know what she suffered, and I tell you I won't repeat it!"

He frowned and wedged his hand into his tight trousers pocket.

"Aren't you playing the heroics, just now, without realizing what your stand will mean to you?" he asked gently. "Remember you and Jerry have been very happy."

She shook her head.

"I tell you I refuse to live with a man who does not love me."

"But I am positive that Jerry does love you, despite—"

"Oh no, he doesn't." She thought of Eleanor, beautiful, unyielding. "It's not my idea of love; I must have all or nothing. I had faith in him up to the very last second; like you, I didn't believe another love-affair was possible; but we were both wrong. Now I'm doing the one rational thing. You know I majored in rational love. I'm determined to cut him out of my life and start over."

"And what is left?"



"My profession." The answer came to her like an inspiration.

"Does that really matter?"

"Yes," she said defiantly. It was the first time she had thought of her profession, in the confusion of the emotional upheaval, and she clung to it like a spar in mid-ocean.

"You wouldn't give him just one more chance, Daphne?"

She shook her head wearily.

"Run along down now, Archie. You've done your duty. I want to pack."

When she had locked him out she went to the door leading into the empty nursery, but she couldn't touch the knob. Their babies! Jerry's vision of them! Jerry and she taking two little youngsters to Sunday-school. A sob tore at her throat. Poor little babies that would never be . . . what became of them? Then she remembered how Jerry had drawn that picture only last spring, and all the time he had his secret woman on Park Avenue. She snapped the key in the lock and went over to Jerry's picture in the tooled-leather frame. Sliding aside the metal catches, she drew it out and tore it up, wrong side toward her.

He could do as much with her picture, and lest he might not notice her act, she laid the pieces on his high-boy. A few of the fragments had turned over; on one piece she could just make out his

feet. He could make better love with his feet than most men could with their hands. Oh Jerry, Jerry! She remembered the shame she had suffered the first night he called, and the agony of that other night, when she had seen him doing the same thing to Eleanor. Well, her struggles to believe in lies was ended. Now Eleanor could take her turn.

She climbed on a chair and drew down the suitcase Jerry had put up there only two days before, boasting: "We'll have to have some decent luggage for our grand labels, eh Daphne?"

While she tried to use a little judgment in selecting her clothes, there was a knock.

"Let me in, Daphne; it's Jerry."

"No, Jerry."

"Please."

"No."

"May I take you to the station, Daphne?"

"No, Jerry."

"You can't go alone."

No answer.

"If you won't let me, Glen has offered to drive you all the way out."

"I don't want him to."

This time Jerry did not answer. There was a long silence. She waited to hear him descend the stairs and finally, deciding she had missed his footsteps, went on with her packing. Twenty minutes later when she came out with the old

wicker suitcase, Jerry was sitting, a hump on the steps. Without a word he took her luggage.

There was nothing more to say.

Grace kissed her, Archie shook hands, Jerry followed Daphne and Glen to the curb. Glen closed the automobile door and started the engine.

## Chapter XXI

FOR months following the separation, Daphne had lived in a hiatus, as if she were outside of herself, her thoughts and emotions separated from her body, and united only by a great effort. Along the highway, stained with brilliant autumn leaves, she tore on L'Aiglon, staring vacantly at the flashing scenery. When she found her irregular hours worried her mother, she made an oval race-track in a big pasture, and found she preferred the monotony this afforded—around and around with no concern for time or distance. Her other favorite occupation was monotonous knitting, simple things that required no attention: shawls and carriage blankets for Junior, an afghan for her mother; stitch after stitch, row after row, while her thoughts and feelings played psychic truant.

Jerry had come up to Bramton the morning after her return, to make one final appeal. It had been but a repetition of the previous night, and she had not relented in the least. When he would have touched her, she shrank away in loathing, remembering how those same hands had ca-

ressed Eleanor. In the middle of the interview Glen had telephoned and she had cheerfully assured him *everything* was fine. A few minutes later she had stood by the door, dry-eyed, immobile, watching Jerry ride away after promising never to bother her again. When the sedan had dropped out of sight, down the hill, she ran up to her "office," exuberant with that sense of freedom he had talked about. It was exquisite to know that he could never again make her suffer. She was through with him forever; through cajoling him, cheering him, worrying over him; through with corroding suspicions always ready to eat into her happiness. She was free! Arms spread in exultation, she dashed up the stairs and into her room, glorying in her swift victory. For years she had dreaded the agony of this moment; now Jerry was gone, and she rejoiced.

The sight of his Windsor bed, however, recalled his rumpled tawny head, propped in the crook of his arm, and the morning smile that greeted her as he reached over to caress her cheek. As she stared at the white counterpane her shoulders sagged, like wax under heat, the tendons of her neck twitched, and flinging herself face down, she smothered her sobs in his pillow. Jerry was gone! Gone! Their life together, those exquisite flashes of love, hours of companionship . . . *Best little pal in the world* . . . the glorious fu-

ture that was to justify the past, Jerry and she and their children, were all wiped out forever! In that flashing realization, followed by a long spell of weeping, her sensibilities seemed to have slipped away, as if they would not be tenants where Jerry was banished.

She had had her divorce, after all, like a funeral service for a baby who had never lived. Glen had insisted, maintaining it was too technical a question for him whether or not they had established a common-law marriage. It was much simpler and safer, he contended, to get a decree; Jerry was eager, too, and Glen was sure Daphne would feel better about it. It was ironic, after all her suffering, that she should have to consider herself legally Jerry's wife. Not that it mattered now. Nothing mattered.

The inquest was no more than a dream. Glen had driven her into White Plains in the pouring rain,—they had not allowed her mother to come, —tears had splashed the windows and, joining one another, streamed down the glass; hushed voices had resounded in the empty court-house. Glen had promised her Jerry would not be there, but Eleanor's maid had been an excellent witness.

About the time Daphne received her interlocutory papers, she was also given the deed to the Carlton Avenue house, with a message, transmitted by Glen, that Jerry had taken everything

he wanted. Through inquiries made at her request, Glen learned Jerry had gone abroad for an indefinite time, and Eleanor Dundee had followed on the next steamer. How long would he be faithful to his real wife?

All winter, Glen made a practice of motoring out to Bramton for Sunday tea. Even at first, when Daphne gazed dull-eyed at the food and wondered why she bothered to keep an empty shell alive, she had been vaguely comforted by the look in his keen eyes. If the part of her that could care were not missing, she knew she would be grateful to any one who, realizing the truth about her, could still look at her like that.

In February, due to Glen's persuasion, she resumed her studies at Columbia, and gradually her feelings came sneaking back into her body, until one Saturday as she was mounting L'Aiglou the smell of his pungent flanks and leathery trappings were unendurable. They represented the sun-splotched woods, a brown tweed suit with leather buttons, a gold-mounted riding-crop, and a pearl button on the pocket of a white sport shirt, vibrating madly over a throbbing heart.

"Unharness him, Michael; I've changed my mind," she called, striding back to the house to resume her interrupted studies. She was fighting now to get back her girlhood stoicism.

Concentration was difficult. With her returning



sensibilities, memories outstripped her will, and, struggle as she would to forget Jerry, old emotions caught her unawares. In the midst of contemporary French literature, alone in her bare room, she would find herself waiting, waiting for Jerry's caressing hand. The first daffodils were harbingers of torture. "My Daffodowndilly!" Her expression grew tense, her mouth set.

During these months of readjustment she isolated herself even from the family. She never visited the little house at the foot of the hill. Her grandmother thought her heartless; her aunt was vainglorious over the fulfilment of her prophecy, by the tilt of her head and the snapping little eyes perpetually proclaiming: "I told you so!" Uncle Robert, on the other hand, treated Daphne as if she were dying of tuberculosis, and his solicitation was as hard to endure as his sister's unspoken jeer. She also discouraged her mother's unexpressed sympathy. A cheat warranted no pity; if the truth were known, it was her mother who deserved the sympathy. For her own part, she had ceased to be tormented by her guilt. One could gradually outgrow the consciousness of shame.

With Glen Bruce, however, it was different. The one person was he with whom she felt no restraint; and more and more, as spring advanced, she turned to him. He knew she was wicked, yet

he loved her. He knew she had spent her passion on Jerry until she was emotionally bankrupt, yet he loved her! This knowledge kept her from losing the fiber of existence, her self-respect, and under his patient guardianship she once more reached out toward her old ambition. The clerkship was waiting. Law was a fascinating profession. He had met a woman lawyer, the other day, keen as any man! Thus he encouraged her, blowing the faint spark of interest into a little kindling blaze; reaching out to her in the way she had always wanted to be approached, through the intellect instead of the heart.

Daphne's love for Jerry had had in it much of the maternal. He was her wayward boy, for whom she had sacrificed everything, even her conscience. With Glen she was the child, a disconsolate little girl, and he her big dependable guardian. He praised her when her marks at college were good, and scolded her when they were not. He protested if her feet were wet, and begged her to take a tonic. But, although his attention was unflagging all those months, he never once spoke a word of love.

Her degree of Bachelor of Arts was finally received in June, and she dreaded the idle summer. Grace had come with the baby, and Daphne read an eternal reproach in her sister's large shiny eyes. She had sold L'Aiglon and Napoleon and

bought a low red roadster. There was no time for tender memories, speeding over sleek highways at a prohibited speed, but neither was there much pleasure. As for golf, that had monopolized the previous summer; she could no more play golf without Jerry than she could have putted in her father's graveyard. The long vacation worried her and she wondered if she might not start her clerkship immediately instead of waiting until fall. Glen was coming for the week-end; she would ask him.

As she waited for his train, slumped in the seat of her new car, she wondered if her request would precipitate the proposal she knew he was valiantly struggling to hold back until she was ready. Well, wasn't she? Dear, big, dependable Glen! She gazed across the village common at the bright spring grass. Last summer it had been burned to dry yellow straw. That was what life did to you—scorched you almost to death and then revived you. Through Glen she was being revived. In years to come her life with Jerry would fade into a dim, unbelievable incident. When she was fifty, what a brief span those three endless years would seem! By that time the shame also would have gone. She and Glen celebrating their silver anniversary! Would she really have forgotten about Jerry?

Two miles away came the faint call of the train

—a faithful servant if one longed for the arriving passenger, inexorable as Fate if one did not. Daphne narrowed her eyes and struggled to shut out the memory of the nights last summer when she had driven down to meet Jerry. She used to stand at the end of the platform and wait for that first reassuring whistle, and always her heart beat as madly as the bell at the crossing. Jerry was coming! Jerry! Jerry! And he had come directly from Eleanor's beautiful white arms. It was a wonder her perfume had not lingered on him.

Just before the panting engine ground down upon the little red-brick station, Daphne emerged from the car and stood dutifully watching. Her look of joyous youthfulness was gone, the large mouth dropped pathetically at the corners, the eyes were seldom anything but wistful. Once more she wore her hair straight as a page boy's, and her manner suggested the prince who was mistaken for the pauper. She smiled affectionately as Glen descended to the platform. He looked bigger and handsomer than usual in a light-gray suit and a new Panama hat. How neat! She would never have to pick up after him—a collar on the floor, a vest clinging to the door-knob, socks tossed anywhere. He saw her and raised his hat. Jerry would have waved a gay salute.

"You're all right, Daphne?" He bent over her, tenderly pressing her hand.

She wished she might feel a tremor of excitement over this meeting; she hadn't seen him for a week; but his hand was just a hand, big and slightly damp. Oh, but it was a protecting, loyal hand that would never steal caresses; that was all she wanted. She was through with emotional pyrotechnics.

"Of course I'm all right, old worry-pot. I'm made out of wire and barrel hoops. See my new toy? It finally came."

He looked from the girl, who stood nervously kicking the rear balloon tire with her rubber-soled shoe, to the low racer.

"Yes, I see, and this old worry-pot isn't so enthusiastic, either. If you spent your vacation resting instead of rushing around, I'd like it much better. Where does one put a suitcase in this tricky affair?"

When he had deposited the crisp cowhide bag in the rear and climbed in beside her, he rubbed his hands anticipatorily.

"I've been looking forward to this week-end like a school-boy."

"Me too, although the idea of my long vacation is rather appalling. Thank Heavens, Archibald Junior is here. He'll provide a little diversion."

"That's so; the Meekses are visiting you, aren't they? I'd forgotten. It's awful being pre-

sented to a new baby, they always seem so incompatible with the enthusiasm they are supposed to produce."

Daphne smiled, but back of her smile was an ache. Jerry would not have found any trouble in being enthusiastic over Archibald Junior. She remembered him hanging over the basket in the hospital, his cinnamon hair falling forward, his eyes misty with awe.

"Can we turn off on a side road and take a ride?" Glen suggested. "I've some good news!"

Daphne toed the gas and shot past the road leading into Miller's Woods, turning to the right.

"I've been engaged as counsel for the Brooklyn Borough Electric Light Company, Daphne."

"Wow! that sounds imposing, Glen!"

"It is, rather."

He was big, this man beside her, big physically, big professionally, big in self-control, big in his devotion! She felt a great pride in him that gave her courage. Surely this was a form of love; a quieter, steadier love than she had felt for Jerry, but quite as real.

"If you get so terribly important I'll be afraid of you, Glen."

"You'd better be." He was silent.

Although she was gazing ahead at the dirt road, she could feel his keen eyes upon her. Should she speak of her position in his office? Was she



ready for his declaration of love? Life with Jerry had taught her the joy of a congenial mate; there was no question in her mind but that she wanted to marry Glen sometime; the only point was, could she give him anything like the emotional response a husband had the right to expect? When she had held his eager hand, a few minutes ago at the station, there had been no slightest tremor. Then she chided herself for an unteachable moron. If she had learned nothing else from Jerry, hadn't he at least taught her the danger of emotions?

"Glen."

"Yes, Daphne." No "dearest" or "precious," nothing but just "Daphne"; yet she was sure it was saturated with love.

"I was thinking, Glen, the summer is long and stupid. Why couldn't I start in my clerkship now?"

"You really want to?" His tone was eager, credulous. "It could be arranged. Oh Daphne, when you are admitted to the bar, let's have a unique letter-head!" He paused, constrained, but there was an unmistakable timbre in his tone.

She listened to the hard dirt plop explosively beneath the balloon tires.

"What would that be, Glen?"

"'Glen Bruce and Wife, Attorneys-at-Law.' How does that sound?"

Clever of him to stress her profession instead



of himself. It sounded wonderful! That was what she wanted. She had tried a love-mate and knew the consuming heat of passion; now she wanted a companion in work.

"Stop under that tree, will you, Daphne, so we can talk?"

Dutifully she drew up under a locust, quivering in the spring breeze. Her heart might have been one of the leaves, so unsteady was the beat. But it was the result of fear, not love. She was afraid! Afraid Glen would slip into a physical love-making, and she did not want it . . . no, no!

He took her hands from the glossy new wheel and held them in his firm grasp.

"You're going to marry me, aren't you, Daphne?"

His voice was exquisitely humble, as if he were asking a great boon. And what was she? A miserable wanton, a love-jaded victim! She turned her honest gray eyes full upon him in gratitude.

"I care for you tremendously, Glen. I think I always have. You were my childhood hero. If there are several kinds of love, I love you." Before he could answer, she went on: "But it isn't at all the sort of love I felt for Jerry. Remember, I told you there wouldn't be much left. There isn't. That part of me is dead."

His eyes narrowed and he tightened his hold on her hands.

"Suppose he should return." Glen never mentioned Jerry by name. "Would he resurrect it?"

She shook her head.

"He must have married Eleanor months ago. In any case, he is out of my life forever."

"Suppose he hasn't, and begs you to take him back?"

Freeing her right hand, she pushed her hair with Jerry's gesture.

"Oh but he won't. He promised he would not, and I believe him that much. But no matter what he does or does not do, nothing on earth would induce me to go through that hell again! He won't be faithful to Eleanor. There's something perverted in his make-up. In twenty-five years maybe I'll look back and pity him, but just now the very thought . . ." She waved her hand, pushing the idea away. "Don't you see, Glen, how different is my feeling for you? You're sort of the everlasting arms, and I'm never afraid. You've carried me through this awful year. . . . I wonder how I should ever have emerged without you!"

He pressed her hand between both his.

"Are you emerged enough to be engaged, dear? I've tried to be patient."

Engaged. Of course; that was what she wanted . . . and yet? . . . Jerry's crushable red lips impatient for her, the vibrating button over his mad heart, his blue eyes drinking her in . . . She

looked up at Glen, wide-eyed; her voice trembled:

"I'm frightened, Glen. Awfully afraid. Suppose I never could free my mind of Jerry. I couldn't marry you."

"You poor, darling baby! You only need more time." He wrapped his big arms about her and drew her to him, tenderly kissing her pale cheek.

None of Jerry's breath-taking passion was in this quiet embrace. She relaxed and tears of relief seeped through her lashes, dotting the gray vest. All fear was gone. There were two kinds of love: that she had given Jerry had been fierce as a frightened she-wolf's; this was a girlish love, and Glen was the big, protecting hero.

"I think I'm crying because I'm happy," she smiled wetly into his face and, helping herself to his striped silk handkerchief, mopped her eyes. "I knew we could work together, but I was afraid of this. It's a wonderful feeling—leaning on you, Glen. I'm so tired of responsibilities. If I weren't afraid of drowning you, I could keep on crying for a couple of weeks."

"Go ahead. I'm ready to hold you like this for a lifetime or two." He took his handkerchief from her and completed the task of wiping her eyes. "But there's one thing you must do, Daphne, before you can hope to crowd out that old life entirely: get rid of the Carlton Avenue house."

"Oh no!" She sat up. That was impossible. The

house was part of herself. It would be committing suicide. Night after night, when she could not sleep and wouldn't think of Jerry, she had wandered slowly from room to room, re-living the purchase of each piece of furniture, each rug and picture. They had bought the oval tip-top table between the windows at a second-hand shop on Fourth Avenue. That was the day she had introduced Jerry to a chocolate-mint soda. He had been crazy about it. "Jove, Daphne! it's horrible to think of the years I've wasted in ignorance. That little cold feeling in the back of the throat! —it's great. Why does any one take anything else?" The squatty vase on the table they had bought at Tiffany's one Saturday. "You're a millionaire's wife, my dear. Your footman holds the sable robes while we go in to buy a *varrse*. Select exactly what you wish; price is nothing." The straw flowers in the iridescent bowl they had picked and dried themselves, wiring the stems one evening before the open fire. Jerry had been very silent that night. Was he thinking of Eleanor?

"I can't sell the house, Glen. The things in it mean too much . . . pure materialism."

"Have you been there since . . . ?"

She shook her head. Her mother had closed it for her, bringing her the few possessions she needed. She would never go into it again, but the thought of any one else living in it, eating break-

fast on the little brick portico, rocking a baby in the back room, was intolerable.

"You'll have to dispose of it, my dear, before we can hope to start our home." He spoke with the conviction of his profession, but his words had started a long train of thoughts: Jerry and she eating their first lunch on the bare floor; Jerry pouncing on the earthworm with his fork and tossing the intruder over the brick wall; Hannah plodding heavily upstairs, alarm-clock in hand, and Jerry breathing, "Thank God," as he beckoned for Daphne to come to him; Jerry slumped in the chair, his soles turned toward the blaze . . . Abruptly her tender memories became acid-eaten. Those nights he had been immersed, not in business worries, as he pretended, but in amorous thoughts of Eleanor.

Daphne looked at Glen and nodded.

"I will sell the place . . . sometime."

"The middle of December I'll be forty, Daphne. Sounds ancient. Might we be married before I take the plunge?"

Married to Glen! What a relief to her abused conscience!

"November?" she suggested, wondering why she postponed it six months. She knew now that she loved him and wanted to marry him; why not say to-morrow? Jerry would never have given her so much leeway. She could hear him imploring

her to marry him Tuesday. If she had . . . If she had it would have been just the same. Nothing would have kept him faithful.

"All right; November," Glen cheerfully agreed. "You'll be acquiring more than me, my dear—a little some one who's likely to make me very jealous."

Daphne's eyes brightened.

"Oh Glen! your little Peggy! I had forgotten! How old is she now? Five?"

"Six, and very pretty. You'll love her, Daphne."

"I shall worship her! How could I have forgotten? You have no idea how selfish I have become. Nothing but my own miserable ego." She remembered Jerry's vision of their walking to Sunday-school with their two little children. Oh, why couldn't she check her memory? She looked up at Glen. "A daughter, a profession, and you! What a wonderful three-ringed circus!"

"To-morrow let me drive you and your mother down to Pelham for dinner, Daphne?"

"To be inspected by my future daughter! Oh Glen! I'm so excited!"

## Chapter XXII

How often the unusual is repeated in rapid succession; a friend we have not seen in five years crosses our path twice in a week; a childless couple have two babies in as many years; a discouraged, jobless man is bewildered by a choice of positions. For eight months the Carlton Avenue house had been closed and apparently forgotten by everyone save Daphne; then, in twenty-four hours, she was asked twice to sell it, the second time by Grace.

The village nurse-girl refused to work on Sundays, and while Glen read the paper on the porch, next morning, Daphne helped her harassed sister. It was while she was feeding the voracious baby through the bars of his crib, smiling at his gasps of excitement between spoonfuls of unsweetened farina, that Grace made her request, introducing it in a most tactless manner.

"The best thing about you, Daphne, is your good luck," Grace sighed, letting down her long hair, which always made her irritable, for bobs were becoming almost obligatory, and her crowning glory threatened to become a wreath of thorns.



"Glen's really worth while—handsome, rich, and successful. I always knew from the first instant I saw that despicable Lothario—"

"Just cut that, Grace!" Daphne commanded sharply.

Her sister opened her eyes in surprise.

"It's the first time I've mentioned the matter, and I don't see what harm it does now. I tell you frankly, Daphne, I think I've been mighty charitable about the whole disgraceful affair. It only goes to show how crazy Glen must be about you to overlook it." Her tone became coaxing: "Are you engaged yet?"

Daphne did not answer; they had agreed to keep the engagement a secret until fall. Something maternal within her now longed to champion Jerry rather than boast his successor.

"Oh well, silence gives consent." Grace shook her long hair over her shoulders. "And it looks as if you really would be a lawyer, after all. It must be wonderful to have a man take you seriously. There is a time in married life when one reaches low ebb. I'm there now. It's taken for granted I should be Junior's slave! Not that I don't love him, but I would like a *little* consideration. Just look at me. I'm the color of a sweet potato, and yesterday I found a gray hair. But what difference does that make, now that I'm married and have a baby?" She brushed her dark

hair savagely. "You didn't get down to the apartment before we left. Bedlam! Bedlam!—with his high chair, and chair-chair, and play-yard. Heavens, you couldn't move around without bumping into something and getting half a dozen runs in your stockings."

"Sell it and buy something bigger," Daphne suggested cheerfully, thinking of several disagreeable things she might have said.

"I was wondering, Daphne—" Grace ran a ruminative comb through her thick side locks—"if you wanted to sell your house."

"Who suggested that?" Daphne suspected collusion where there was none.

"My own common sense. It's been empty going on a year."

Daphne thought of Grace living in their bedroom, lounging before their fireplace in the living-room, little Archie occupying the empty nursery. And she . . . expected to visit them! No, she couldn't do it; that was asking too much. When it was sold it must fade out of her life forever.

"I'm not planning to sell just now." She scrapped together the last of the cereal, fearful lest Grace would argue the point. Her apprehension was justified.

"Wait until you see Glen's home to-day. I went to his wife's funeral, and it's really imposing. Like a picture in 'House and Garden.' You'd never

dream of going back to your little place after that."

"But I tell you I'm not going to sell," Daphne's voice rose ominously and her hand trembled as she tucked the baby under his covers. Did Grace suppose that in any circumstances Daphne would take another man to live in Jerry's home? Nothing in her past seemed more immoral. To wake up in the big four-poster and see a different face than Jerry's on the pillow beside her. To eat breakfast on the little portico and vision Jerry pouncing on the worm. And what about "their chair" in the living-room? Was Grace utterly insensible?

"I thought you were so intelligent, Daphne. Please explain the sense of sentimentally clinging to a house that represents a very disgraceful episode—to those who know the truth—when you never intend to live in it again."

Daphne jumped up like a manikin yanked with a string.

"I wouldn't sell the house to you if I were starving! I'd rather have it drop to pieces; I'd rather rent it to niggers. If I were Archie, I'd run away with the sexton's wife."

"Indeed?" Grace looked over her shoulder in queenly scorn. "Now I know what I always suspected. You're the most selfish, self-centered, disagreeable—as well as the most immoral—girl I

ever had the misfortune to know." She paused, still dissatisfied with the strength of her retort. "And as far as Archie goes, the less said the better. Even though I was so primitive as to marry him, I can keep his love, thank you."

Grace might have been contented with the strength of her blow if she had seen Daphne crumpled in her big leather chair in her "office" a few minutes later, tears dripping from her chin. Could any girl have kept Jerry's love? Would Eleanor? Certainly no one could have failed worse than Daphne. Mopping her eyes, she thought of Glen, waiting for her downstairs while she sat crying about Jerry. She rose resolutely and selected a creamy lace dress. She was going to look her best for Glen, although he would love her in rags.

The congregation was singing the last hymn as Daphne and Glen parked the car and waited for Mrs. Churchill to join them. Daphne talked hurriedly, afraid of the memories that fought for recognition . . . she and Jerry . . . their children . . . Sunday-school. No, no!

"Let's ride to the station and back, Glen. I hate hymns when I'm not singing them."

Grace's description of Glen's home was excellent. It might have been in "House and Garden's" advertising section, picturing the superiority of

Who's-this tapestry bricks, or So-and-So's Italian tiles, or What's-his-name's perennial shrubs. It spread out, long and low, on each side of a colonial door, with an opulent disregard for taxes. A stereotyped surburban brick dwelling, with great plate-glass windows glittering in the noon sunshine, blue spruce, barberry, and bridal-wreath banking the brick foundations. As Glen turned the car into the driveway, Daphne mused that here was a house she would cheerfully sell Grace.

A little girl ran out the front door, and around the path, carefully refraining from a short cut across the velvety lawn.

"Daddums! Daddums dear!" She was plump, with bright cheeks like her father's and a thick crop of russet curls that hung to her shoulders. Her eyes were the color of her hair, giving her a strange, animal beauty. She flung herself upon him, and buried her face in his coat.

Glen picked her up in his arms, and as Daphne saw the love between these two she was filled with reverence, not unlike a religious fervor. Who was she, to come between father and daughter? Instead of being jealous of Peggy she felt apologetic, as if she were taking what rightfully belonged to the child.

"She's adorable, Glen!"

"We're a little shy, but we'll get over it," he apologized, as chunky stockinged legs curved

about his waist and the chubby face snuggled into his shoulder.

"She's very b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l." Mrs. Churchill spelt out her praise. "And it is so refreshing to see curls."

Glen paused with his burden; his large, ruddy face beamed happily.

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Mrs. Churchill; her hair's been a great problem. As far as I can see, she's the only child in captivity with long curls, but when I suggested to Rose, who was her mother's nurse, too, that possibly we should concede to the demands of style, she actually wept. Then I discussed the matter with Peggy's grandmother, and we decided to act independently of the prevailing mode. The one hitch is that Peggy rebels."

"I want a boyish-bub," lamented the child, her voice muffled by the gray shoulder.

"What do you think, Daphne?" Glen asked.

Daphne thought the interest Glen took in Peggy's hair-cut was sweet, and a little pathetic, but she answered:

"We want so many things in life we can't have, Glen, I'd always vote 'yes' whenever it is possible; therefore I'm for the boyish-bub."

"Hear that, Peggy? Aunt Daphne says you ought to have a boyish-bub, and she knows."

"When can I?" queried the child, skeptically.

"To-morrow, bright and early, if I have to take you myself."

The white stockings squeezed the paternal stomach ecstatically, as she whispered, "I like her."

"I don't blame you," he laughed, looking over at Daphne. "And, now that vital matter is settled, let's go in."

There was an order and hush to the large rooms that made Daphne feel as if Mrs. Bruce's funeral was still in progress. A servant moved noiselessly about the dining-room to the right of the hall, and the shades were drawn nearly to the bottom of the windows in the living-room on the left. The thickly padded stairs hushed their footsteps. Instinctively she lowered her voice. The house was Mrs. Bruce's. She was dead: it was only respectful!

"A very handsome home," Mrs. Churchill commented timidly to Daphne when they were left alone in the green-and-gold guest-room. "I remember Grace had this in mind when she refurnished her bedroom."

"A handsome morgue." Daphne ran her comb through her straight hair, wondering if Glen preferred curls. Glen was always willing to leave things as they were; Jerry forever changed them. She did not believe Glen enjoyed this reign of the dead. Why didn't he snap the shades to the top



of the windows, clear out some of the old servants, turn on a phonograph, throw things about a bit? Get on good terms with his home! She felt sorry for Peggy and Glen; they were aliens here.

When she and her mother descended the stairs, father and daughter were waiting in the hall, hand in hand.

"Martha says dinner's ready," Glen said.

"Better hurry," supplemented Peggy.

After dinner they sat in the big sun-porch beyond the living-room, where the Sunday papers lay on a low table in pristine neatness, and the cretonne-cushioned seats were as unwrinkled as Peggy's plump cheeks. Even the Boston ferns in the brown willow fernery shed not a frond on the polished floor, and the silent canary had not spilt a kernel. It was all so utterly different from Carlton Avenue, Daphne mused, she ought to be thankful.

Mrs. Churchill in a far corner inspected the Sunday Supplement at arm's length, while Glen went to open a box of candy and Peggy sidled shyly to Daphne, pointing to her wrist-watch.

"I can tell time. It's one minute after twenty minutes after two."

"So it is. Won't you sit on my lap?"

The child backed up and allowed herself to be lifted to Daphne's knees.

"I like you," she whispered.

Daphne parted the curls over the ears and whispered back. "I love you." She forgot her longing to be freed from responsibilities and thought how wonderful it would be to have the care of this little child. What fun to dress her, put on silk socks in place of those long stockings, and little white pumps! She would have to study girls' fashions and decide which were the more becoming to a plump little lady. How the saleswomen would stare at her when she said: "I'd like to see some imported frocks for my little daughter of six."

She ran her fingers through the russet hair. It was darker than Jerry's and lacked the glittering high lights of his; more like her hair and Jerry's combined. She remembered what a lark they had had the night before Grace's wedding. She had insisted on washing his head, and when it was a mass of thick lather, he had pretended to be David Belasco engaging her for his new play. She had impersonated Sothern, and with one wet hand clasped to her heart she had started to quote: "If I were king, ah, love, if I were king!" but it had brought back the horrible memory of Freda, so she changed, and clapping her hands, she had Charlestoned noisily on the bathroom tiles. She smiled now at her childishness.

Glen came in, rich chocolates piled high in a silver dish.

"I take it from your smile that I have a good emissary."

She felt like a cheat, but how could she tell him she was smiling at memories? In reparation she hugged Peggy with a sudden fervor.

"I love her, Glen."

"Here, Peg, pass these to Mrs. Churchill. Please, Daphne, come see my new car," he coaxed, impatient to have her alone, already jealous of his daughter, as he had prophesied.

In the tapestry-brick garage, between the two cars, he took her in his arms and strained her to him with the first semblance of passion.

"Everything's going to be all right, darling?"

She suffered herself to be pressed to his large resilient body; but there was no throb in her temples or catch in her throat. Love, for her, had ceased to be a matter of embraces.

"Can't we sit on the step here, a minute, Glen? I want to talk."

They sat on the running-board of the new car, and she leaned comfortably against his shoulder. That was better.

"When can I start work, Glen? Everything's more right than ever I deserve, but I'm eager to get busy."

"I was thinking about that, Daphne, last night, just before I fell asleep. I'll be ready for you two weeks from to-morrow. Real work, remember.

Drawing up summonses and complaints, examining judgment debtors in supplementary proceedings—there's lots you can do."

She begged him to let her start in immediately, but he insisted that she take a fortnight vacation.

"I'm thinking of an engagement present. I'll give it to you that day. I'm going to have it made to order."

Daphne stared at the hub of the old car and thought of the two rings tied in one of Jerry's old handkerchiefs, hidden in the bottom of her bureau drawer.

"I don't care for jewelry, Glen." She held out her ringless hands. "If you don't mind, I wouldn't even wear a wedding-ring." What did wedding-rings symbolize? She had worn one for years without being married.

"What I'm thinking of isn't a diamond solitaire." He smiled. "It's rather an odd engagement present, but I imagine you'll like it."

"If it isn't diamonds and platinum and everything, I'm sure I shall." Her voice trailed into silence, for she suddenly realized she was quoting Jerry's description of his wedding present for her. The gift she never had received.

## Chapter XXIII

DAPHNE and Glen were finishing lunch at the Hotel Bossert. She had come to receive her engagement present and hoped to start work. Smiling to herself, she thought what a boy even a big, prominent lawyer of almost forty could be. Glen was childishly excited over the gift that awaited her.

"You couldn't give me anything I want so much as the job," she contended. "Already I smell the delicious odor of musty leather books!"

"Good imagination, my dear."

Imagination is relative to the distance between the eyes, Jerry had said. She felt the space with thumb and forefinger. Since her engagement, memories of Jerry, which she had kept in a tidy heap, now fluttered perpetually into her thoughts. She began to dream of him again at night. Sometimes she was married to both men; or she was living with both and married to neither. She would wake up in terror, cold sweat once more drenching her nightgown. In the morning after such a dream, under some pretense she would call Glen at his office; the sound of his voice comforted her. Calm,

happy, useful would be her life with him. She was looking forward to November. What more could any woman want than a daughter, a profession, and a man's true love?

"Headache, Daphne?"

She opened her eyes and shook her head.

"I'm counting my blessings and you're interrupting me."

"Wait until after the engagement present." He reached over and possessed her hand. That would be one of her blessings, she thought—marrying a man who made love over the table instead of under it. "I know you're wondering how you can act sufficiently enthusiastic after all the fuss I've made. But I'll wager you won't have to act at all."

"Well, come on back to the office and hand it out, instead of bragging so much." He had succeeded in arousing her interest, although she could think of nothing that would give her the pleasure he so confidently expected.

When he had her in his private office, with the door shut, she experienced exactly the fear he had prophesied. Suppose she didn't like it at all! She was poor at dissembling, and he was so enthusiastic!

"Come this way, Daphne." He led her toward the library. Books? Then her eyes grew round. She thrust her head forward and her lips parted. She was looking into the little room across the

library that had once been Glen's. Now it was transformed into a miniature private office: cream stippled walls, a blue Ming rug, a broad mahogany table-desk and swivel chair. The wide window-seat, like the big arm-chair beside it, was cushioned in Delft-blue leather.

"Yours, Daphne. Glen Bruce and Wife."

"Really? For me!" Tears of joy sprang to her eyes. Nothing else in the world could have made her so happy. She stood breathing in the wonder of it. Her office! Dropping into the desk chair, she ran her hand over the telephone, across the tooled-leather blotter, the memorandum-pad, the calendar.

"Buttons, Glen! Do they really work?"

"Rather. The red one is for the office boy; the black one for Miss Simpson. Try them."

She looked at him, at the desk and once more raised her eyes to his. He nodded encouragement and she pressed the black button with an inquisitive forefinger.

"Oh Glen, if she comes, what'll I say? It isn't real. It's a fairy-tale. It's too wonderful! Me with a real office!"

Miss Simpson, her glasses at a disapproving angle, appeared at the doorway. It was very evident that she objected to a mixture of love-making and business.

"Oh Miss Simpson, will you please get that



brief of Thompson versus Davies, and Shepherd? Miss Churchill is going to run down my citations." Bruce turned to Daphne. "You can just go through the brief of the law and see if any of them have been reversed or modified."

She waited until his secretary was out of hearing.

"Oh Glen! can I really do all that?"

At his nod of assurance, she pounded the desk with her fists.

"Oh, oh, oh! Isn't it wonderful! There's nothing else in the whole round world I should have loved like this."

"It's a very selfish gift, dear. Can you imagine what it'll mean to me, having you so close?"

She nodded understandingly. She had not loved Jerry for three years without realizing what it meant to be near one's sweetheart. Ashamed that her thoughts should have drifted to Jerry now, of all times, she said without obvious connection:

"I meant to tell you some time ago. I'm ready to sell the Carlton Avenue house at any time, furnished, just as it is. Grace and I had an awful row about it. Maybe you've noticed how disdainfully she treats me? She wanted to buy it, but I couldn't bear the idea. Mother realized how I felt and she's bought Grace the adjoining apartment for her birthday."

"Sounds like Grace," he muttered.

Miss Simpson returned with the brief and the red book.

"Anything else, Mr. Bruce?" She did not so much as look at the girl who sat before the new desk, still in her gloves and hat.

"No," answered Glen, walking toward the window. "No, Miss Simpson." He waited until she had closed the door after her. "Daphne!" She looked up, surprised by the seriousness of his tone. Was he hurt? Had he expected her to be more demonstrative?

"Yes, Glen?"

"He's back."

She jumped up, the swivel chair rolled easily behind her.

"Jerry?"

"Yes." There was a pause. "He stopped in to see me this morning."

Jerry was there this morning! She could see his easy, graceful swing, his eager blue eyes! If she had come in the morning, as she had wanted to, she would have met him!

Suddenly feeling the need of protection, she crossed to Glen and he slipped his arm about her.

"Is he . . . married, Glen?"

"No, I believe not."

She looked across the water. He was there somewhere at that moment! It was breath-taking to think of him so close, instead of three thousand

miles away. Why hadn't he married Eleanor? Did he mean those things he had said to her?

"You're not afraid, Daphne?"

Was she? She didn't know. When she did not answer his question, Glen took her by the arms.

"He'll never get you again, Daphne. He's had his chance!"

"Oh no, never!" she cried. "He doesn't want me by now, and I don't want him! It would be the same agony all over! I want this new life, yours and mine and Peggy's."

He sat on the window-seat and drew her on his lap. The blue leather squeaked under the weight.

"I'm going to take care of you from now on, my dear. Four years ago, if I could have saved you, I would have."

"I know, Glen." She kissed his warm red cheek above the beard line. This was the kind of love she craved—quiet, steadfast, dependable. She would never have to watch his honest gray eyes in terror of a rival.

But Jerry was across the river! She might meet him swinging along the street. She might glimpse his coppery head in the theater or catch his vital eyes in a passing automobile! Her heart pounded furiously and she pressed her cheek to Glen's, waiting for it to subside. Suppose she did see Jerry again; what of it? She was past history!

She would mean no more to him than the woman he had taken to Atlantic City, whose name she did not even know.

"Did he ask about me?" she asked in a whisper.

"Yes."

"And you told him about . . . us?"

He nodded.

"How did he take it?"

"I think he was relieved. His extraordinary conscience seemed to be bothering him. When he knew I intended marrying you, he actually thanked me."

"Oh, so that's it!" She rose and walked slowly back to the desk. Jerry's miserable conscience! That was why he had not married Eleanor. Now that he felt Glen was freeing him from his inseparable responsibility, he would comply with Eleanor's demands. She wasn't the sort of woman to let a man trifle with her.

For once she could be grateful to Eleanor. It would be a comfort to know he was married. Jerry needed some woman to look after him.

"Can I begin work, Glen?"

"Immediately!" He rose and looked at his watch. "I'm twenty minutes late, Daphne. Miss Simpson will have to show you how to run down my cited authorities. There's a little dressing-room where you can take off your hat and powder your nose."

As he turned toward the door, she suddenly felt ashamed of her interest in Jerry and, stopping Glen, she reached on tiptoe and kissed him full on the mouth.

"You're a genie, a fairy godfather, an adorable darling, Glen!"

It was several moments before he would release her, murmuring, "Everything's coming out all right, little girl!"

Alone in her office, ready for work, she held her finger poised over the black button that summoned Miss Simpson. She was starting her professional career. How thrilled she would be if only Glen had not told her about Jerry! Out of the corner of her eye she could glimpse the New York sky-line. "If each of those lights represented some man's love . . ." What a flattering way Jerry had! Did Eleanor appreciate it or was she used to men's adulation? Daphne shifted her forefinger and pressed the red button.

"Help me move this desk around, please," she said to the office boy. "I want the light at my back."

For three hours she resolutely struggled to keep her mind on her task. It wasn't easy. The boat whistles reminded her that Jerry was back. The office boy humming, "Rose Marie, I love you . . ." recalled the wedding party. Even the sunshine creeping into her window became the

high lights in Jerry's hair. But each time her mind slipped she resolutely returned to her work, and no one, watching her, would have supposed she had a single thought outside of the brief and the red-covered book.

She left at five o'clock. Glen saw her to the elevator, lamenting his late appointment that prevented their going together to the Grand Central.

"I expect you to labor long and diligently, if I'm to go into partnership with you," she grinned.

Down on Court Street, in the confusion of home-hurriers, she found herself studying every passing face, watching the tops of the crowd, for a hat slanting over the right eye; turning suddenly at the sound of an automobile horn, to glimpse the driver.

How senseless! Moreover, she didn't want to see him.

At the subway kiosk a girl in a big red hat paused to adjust the weight of a heavy baby and a gaping bag.

"Why, hello, Daphne! What luck meeting you! I've just returned from Texas, but I swear it was hotter down in that subway, so Bubbles and I decided to trolley home." Kitty straightened the baby's lace bonnet and looked for Daphne's approval. "Grown, hasn't she?"

"Splendidly." Had Kitty heard about Jerry and

her? Daphne hoped not. She didn't want sympathy.

"You're not looking so extra, Daphne. Great expectations?"

So she hadn't heard! The last time she had seen Kitty they had talked about the future occupant of the nursery. Daphne crushed down the thought and answered with a bit of braggadocio:

"Yes, great expectations . . . professionally. I'm going to be a lawyer, you know. Staying at Bramton and I've got to scoot for a train. 'By."

"Good-by." Kitty seemed hurt at the summary dismissal, but added cheerfully, "Remember me to your fascinating husband."

Fascinating husband! He was an agonizing husband. Jerry, exalted-of-women! Daphne pushed through the turnstile, her shoulders high and defiant. At that moment she was ready to meet him and show him that he was not fascinating to her. She had Glen, and the law, and Peggy.

The next morning Daphne ate an early breakfast with her mother and Archie, who was commuting to Brooklyn.

"I really do work," she was bragging between hurried spoonfuls of cornflakes. "If either you or Mother wish to see me on business, call up and make an appointment. And do it damned soon. I'm busting to show you my office. It's beautiful."



"Glen is a wonderful man," mused Mrs. Churchill, pulling the plug out of the coffee-percolator.

"You like him, don't you, Archie? I've never heard you say a thing about him." Daphne looked affectionately at her pale, cheerful brother-in-law.

"Oh, sure I like him! He's a prince of a fellow. But he doesn't need any championing, Daphne; praise on my part would be presumptuous. He's headed to be one of the most prominent men in Brooklyn."

"Who is?" asked Grace, coming in with the baby's empty bottles. "Half-past seven breakfast is cruel."

"But you didn't have to come down, dear," soothed her mother.

"I can't stay upstairs and listen to Junior. Who's the most prominent man in Brooklyn?"

"Glen," explained her husband.

"Oh," icily.

The telephone rang harshly in the adjoining library.

"Heavens! Who else is up, this unearthly hour? I'll bet some one at the church is dead, Archie. One might as well be married to an undertaker as an assistant minister!"

Archie threw down his napkin and went to answer it. Motionless, the three at the table listened.

"Oh, hello, Glen, just talking of you. . . .

What? . . . Jerry? . . . No, papers aren't delivered here. . . . You don't *mean* it! My God! . . . Killed instantly?"

Daphne sprang from the table, followed by her mother and sister.

"What is it, Archie? Give me the phone."

He held her away with one hand, while he sat listening, his face white with horror.

Killed instantly! Jerry! A chill started at the back of Daphne's knees and crept over her until she shook. Dead! She would never see him again! Jerry dead! He had always been so tremendously alive. He had wanted to live too many lives in one . . . and now he was dead! Jerry! Cold and stiff in his coffin! He used to lie curled like the letter S. His blue eyes closed forever, never to gaze in admiration at any other woman! The fascinating Jerry! Here was the final solution to her months of struggle. Only with Jerry dead could she really be free! Yet the idea of living without him somewhere in the world, the definite knowledge that never again would she catch sight of his tawny head, never look into his blue eyes, made life strangely empty and intolerable.

"Jerry is dead?" Mrs. Churchill queried in a whisper.

Daphne fancied she read relief in her mother's tone, as if she also realized this was the only satisfactory way for Daphne to cut herself off

from the past. Suddenly, she felt a tremendous pity for the man she had loved. Dead! Life could do nothing more for him. What had it amounted to? A series of failures.

"Here, take the phone, Daphne. Glen wants to speak to you." Archie held out the instrument.

She called in a thin, unnatural voice:

"Yes, Glen, this is Daphne, tell me . . . ?"

For once his voice did not comfort her. Glen, too, would be glad Jerry was dead. Selfish! They were all selfish!

"A frightful tragedy, dear. There's a big to-do in the morning papers."

"What is it, exactly?" she demanded sharply.

"Eleanor Dundee went to Jerry's apartment last night. She shot at him and then killed herself."

"Eleanor Dundee dead, too! They're both dead?" Oh, she had been relentless!

"No, Daphne, she didn't touch him."

The room careened. Daphne sat down with the telephone.

"Didn't touch him? Jerry's all right?"

"Yes."

Jerry was not dead! Eleanor had killed herself on his account and he had gone unscathed. That was different!

"You'd better not come to town to-day, Daphne."

"Oh yes, I must, Glen. I'm leaving immediately."

She rang off before he could offer further protests and, turning, faced the family, who were whispering in the corner. She was ashamed of mixing her family in this sordid scandal. Quite possibly some energetic reporter would ferret out the truth of her relations with Jerry, and the thought of her mother's sorrow filled her with remorse. Yet, permeating all her revulsion and bitterness, she was conscious of a definite sense of relief. Jerry was alive! He was alive and she could hate him. She did hate him. She despised him. When she had thought he was dead she pitied him, but now . . . she clenched her teeth. The man she had once loved was no better than a murderer!

"For Heaven's sake! Did you ever hear anything so disgusting in all your life!" demanded Grace, having heard the tragedy from Archie. "How did he ever get hold of Eleanor Dundee? What happened to the stenographer or whoever it was that made you leave him?"

"It was always Eleanor!" Daphne answered tartly, going for her hat.

"Eleanor . . . then!" Grace's voice was shrill as she followed Daphne into the hall. "The deep creature! I always felt there was something un-

derhand about her. But with her looks and money she could have had a dozen men, without killing herself for him!"

Daphne pulled her hat low over her frightened eyes and called Archie. If her relationship with Jerry did come out in the papers . . . ! Horrible! The tabloid sheets with a series of pictures illustrating her downfall! She paused to kiss her mother pityingly. It was bad enough to have one's daughter mixed up in a love-suicide, but what if all the truth were published . . . !

## Chapter XXIV

"GAY LOTHARIO SHOT BY MILLIONAIRE MISTRESS. ELEANOR DUNDEE, divorced, pays for illicit love with her life. Shoots wildly. Commits Suicide."

SITTING in the last seat of the rear car, as far away from other commuters as possible, Daphne stared at the head-lines of her conservative paper, and a chill ran through her. The gay Lothario had once been her man! At this moment thousands of people were reading the sordid tale and despising him. Her Jerry!

Archie, who had hurriedly skimmed the entire article, looked up with a sigh of relief.

"It's all right, Daphne. Here's all it says about you."

She took his paper, waiting until the solid black words separated themselves into letters. No, it wasn't much. Merely the date of their marriage,—how little they knew!—who she was, where she came from, and the date of their divorce. Three years of ecstasy and misery compressed into as many lines.

What a rich haul for some reporter if he dug

out the truth! A flush of shame scorched her body.

"I suppose, Archie, all you ministers will use Jerry as a lesson on the wages of sin?" she said bitterly.

"You must admit it's a good argument," he answered gently.

She nodded.

"But, in spite of everything, can't you almost bring yourself to feel sorry for him?"

"Sorry for him? He's the most pathetic figure in the world."

She looked up from the newspaper, surprised at Archie's extreme sympathy. After all, pity was the last thing Jerry would want—gay, debonair Jerry!

Tense with revulsion, she undertook to read the whole article. With a great deal of repetition it stated that Eleanor had gone to his apartment the second night after his return from Europe, insisting that he marry her. When he refused she drew out a little revolver, and before he knew what she was doing she had shot wildly at him and killed herself. A letter to her father in California found in her suite at the Park Lane, substantiated Jerry's account. His reason for refusing to marry her was that he loved another woman. It was intimated that she was a French actress.

Daphne dropped the paper to the floor of the



car with a sense of loathing. It was only eight months since he had left her for Eleanor, and already he was in love with some one else! It wasn't love; it was lust. They had merely been two in his series of women.

"He doesn't deserve any sympathy, Archie," she protested. "He hasn't any right to go on wrecking one woman's happiness after another's."

"I'm not trying to excuse him, Daphne, and of course I agree with you that he has forfeited the right of any self-respecting woman's . . . uh . . . uh . . . interest," Archie agreed hastily.

Interest! Jerry had a way of getting more than that.

"If the papers learn of our relationship, it's going to be hard on Mother." Daphne leaned her head wearily against the window. Then she sat up, hunching her shoulders, and added defiantly, "Just the same, I can never be too thankful I didn't marry him."

"What difference does it make now?" Archie asked in mild surprise. "It would have worked out the same, either way."

"Oh, but don't you see? I feel much less responsible for him than if I had ever promised to love, honor, and cherish him so long as we both should live. I gave him the fairest trial. And he proved himself to be what he is." She found comfort in talking to Archie; his gentle sympathy

made it unnecessary for her to stand up for the renegade, and her cold unemotional argument gave her that sense of mental supremacy she used to possess before she knew Jerry. "You were right when you said it might be hard to kill my love for him. Threads of memory kept tangling my thoughts. Sometimes I was really worried. But after this . . ." She waved toward the paper, her lips tight.

He wouldn't marry Eleanor because he loved another woman. A French girl? She hoped so. France was the place for a man like Jerry. She visioned him in an olive grove, the sun glinting his hair, his arms straining a dark Latin girl to him, their bodies welded, his lips pressed against her rosy cheek. And after her there would be another and another. Daphne's nostrils dilated and she experienced the old revulsion of childhood.

In New York, Archie rushed her through the station to a taxi, but not before she saw thousands of people, each with a morning paper hugged under his arm, setting forth Jerry's infamy. A national blackguard! Would his name become a byword? Symbolic of a roué? "Don't be a Veerland!" No wonder Archie said he was the most pathetic figure in the world.

Glen met Daphne as she opened the office door. His large ruddy face was sand color, his manner grave, even his voice was hushed.

"You're late, dear."

"Archie made me taxi. Shouldn't I have come, Glen? I couldn't stay up in the country."

He said nothing, but followed her into her private office, his gift of yesterday, and closed the door.

"Oh, Glen, isn't it awful!"

"Frightful!"

His tone, his pallor, his demeanor all impressed upon her with new emphasis, the horror of the shooting. Eleanor was dead! She had scarcely given her a thought before. Dead! And Jerry was responsible! Jerry, her Jerry, who had sat in Eden telling her of his Santa Claus grandfather, the kindly old minister. She pressed her hand to her mouth as if to keep back the anguish that tore at her heart.

"But there is a possibility your secret will not leak out, Daphne. Good you got that divorce!"

His words swung her back to herself. Her secret! She hadn't thought of it in connection with Glen. Perhaps he might want to be released from a girl whose name would be bandied about in contempt. Her immediate reaction to the idea was a sense of bitterness. How far-reaching was Jerry's power to ruin her life! Then came a partial realization of what her life would be without even Glen. He had been the raft to carry her from the shipwreck. No, he was far more than

that. He was the reliable, ocean-going steamer. But she wouldn't travel as a stowaway.

"I understand exactly how you feel, Glen. You don't want the name of the woman you're going to marry featured in the picture papers."

"I shall abhor it," he said tensely. Then he held her by both shoulders. "If it does leak out, darling, will you marry me immediately? We can run away until it all dies down. Will you?"

She drew a deep breath and closed her eyes. His arms were about her, protecting her from the world.

"Oh Glen! you're sure you don't want to be released from a hussy like me?"

"Released, Daphne?" he reproached. "I supposed that at least you knew I loved you, although I sometimes wonder if you will ever really love me."

She looked at him in surprise. She had thought he was satisfied with the love she was able to give him. Of course she loved him dearly! Without him all those awful months would have been unendurable.

"I think I love you a lot now, Glen," she answered gently, standing tiptoe.

"You'll let me take you away from all the publicity, if it's necessary, dear?" he begged, not arguing the point.

She settled back on her heels, thoughtfully.

Marry Glen to-morrow or the next day and run away from all this—wasn't that the most sensible thing to do? Everybody would be relieved, even Jerry! He wanted her to marry so that it would clear his conscience. What remnant of conscience had he left?

But she was afraid to trust her heart. Suppose her hatred should suddenly turn into love—No, no! Not that! Fright widened her eyes. She must never love Jerry again. He didn't love her. He was going to marry a French girl.

"Daphne!" Glen spoke sharply, and she turned, startled. "Don't look like that. You've got to forget about him."

She nodded slowly.

"I will, as soon as this blows over. In the end it will be a good thing for us, Glen, for it will wipe away every vestige of tenderness I had left."

She knew by his manner he was not entirely reassured. Poor Glen! She wasn't giving him much. But she would make up, later on.

He released her and looked at his watch.

"I'll be busy all day, darling, and I want you to consider yourself a prisoner. We'll eat lunch here and to-night I'll put you on your train. I don't want you alone on the street." Then he added, as if to lighten the tension, "I haven't forgotten that I owe you two days' pay, dear."

He left her, the echo of his forced laugh stir-

ring up bitter memories. Her first day's pay was for the work she had done in the library four years ago, when Glen had tried to help her forget Jerry. If only she had succeeded then! Life seemed to be a series of struggles to forget.

Daphne was a prisoner, and the long morning dragged by as if it too were in custody, shackled with ball and chain. At times she was filled with horror at the possibility of her own scandal; then she wept silently for Eleanor. What right had Jerry to any woman's love? And her pity would change to vituperative scorn. As Archie said, he had forfeited even the interest of any decent woman! But her wrath would subside again into sympathy for Jerry. And so the morning passed.

At noon, Glen sent to a neighboring restaurant for broiled chicken and meringue glacé, which they ate from Daphne's glossy new desk.

"Taste good, dear?" he asked solicitously.

"Delicious," she agreed, cutting the crisp brown skin with a sharp steel knife; but her far-away eyes were seeing another meal: a man and a maid sitting on the floor in an empty room, leaning against a faded lavender wall-paper, eating ham sandwiches and chocolate éclairs. The man's arm encircled the girl, who snuggled up to him, her head pillowed in the hollow of his arm, where she could feel his heart pounding madly for her. That day he had taught her to love wistaria . . .

but the wistaria had died! She mustn't forget that! "I've never tasted such delicious chicken in all my life, Glen."

"That's good."

After lunch he wanted to put her into a taxi and send her home; reporters might come, and they must not find her. It was only after much pleading and persuasion that she gained his permission to remain a prisoner in her private office.

Left alone for the afternoon, she wondered why she had wanted to stay. It was impossible to keep her mind on her work; and she roamed back and forth, from her desk to the blue window-seat. If she were home, there would be Grace! Perhaps this was better. The real truth was she could think of no place she wanted to be, nor anything she wanted to do. She knelt childishly on the window-seat and drummed on the glass. In every one of those innumerable offices men were discussing the latest news. "Good Lord! how can women love a man like that?" Well, how could they? She hadn't been very intelligent in her dealings with Jerry, but at least she had shown more rationality than Eleanor. Eleanor was dead! And where was Jerry? Where did one go in a case like his? How little he had known what awaited him, three days ago when he sailed up the harbor. Had he been alone or with his latest amour? Did he remember what he had said to her



about the millions of lights along the sky-line? Of course not. He had possessed two loves since her.

She sank back on her heels and her mouth tightened. Why didn't she marry Glen immediately in any case, and get away from this ugly tragedy? Jerry was nothing to her. Nothing? Had Eden been nothing? Their honeymoon? Their home on Carlton Avenue?

It was pleasanter to hate Jerry. Those tender memories racked her nerves and clouded her mind. Was there any book in the library that could hold her attention? She rose wearily, with no expectation.

Voices in Glen's office! She must not be discovered! Tiptoeing across the narrow room, she paused guiltily as an old board creaked. In the silence she heard a familiar voice that gripped her heart and sent the rows of books reeling. Her imagination was not tricking her. No one else in the world enunciated in such rich, musical tones. Jerry!

She could only catch words, but they told his story: "Sailing Friday . . . *Berengaria* . . . settle permanently." Noiselessly she crept back into her office and shut the door. He was going back to France and his latest love. How nearly she had forgotten that she despised him!

It was impossible to remain in the office. She must get away. Glen had been right. Scribbling a

note, telling him she had changed her mind and gone home, she dashed through the reception room and out into the corridor, panicky at the thought of meeting Jerry. Yet she lingered by the elevators, hoping that he might come. It was the last glimpse she would ever get of him. Then she scorned herself for a sentimental weakling. Why should she ever see him again? Vigorously she dug the "Down" button.

At the station she had fifty minutes to wait. People were still reading with unabated interest. . . . "Millionairess Suicide for Love." . . . "Love Episode Ends in Death!" . . . "When is a Man a Murderer?" It seemed eons ago that it had happened, but the greedy public would gorge on it for a week to come!

Daphne sat in the waiting-room, beside a fat woman reading a tabloid paper and chewing gum. Over the thick arm, Daphne could glimpse a picture of a room with a white maltese cross on the wall. "Bedroom of Jerry Veerland, where shooting occurred." She tried to shift her gaze, but it held her like a lodestone. Finally she forced herself to look away, and she watched the large woman's jowls move as she kneaded the gum. Was it possible that Jerry would not marry Eleanor because he still loved her? Old ecstasy chased in her veins at the thought. Then she denied the theory. Absurd! That wasn't like Jerry!

Mistaking Daphne's scrutiny for friendliness, the woman opened the conversation by rapping the picture with a knuckle banded by a wide wedding-ring.

"There ought to be some law to cover them kind of men. He's a murderer same as Thaw and they both go free. If I had a million dollars I wouldn't kill myself for no man. But I wouldn't anyhow, far as that goes . . ." She chewed savagely, and with narrowed lids peered at the station clock, sighed, and reached for a black oil-cloth bag.

Her discarded newspaper lay against Daphne's coat; the white star designating the bullet hole in the wall stood out conspicuously. Daphne promised herself she would not pick up the paper. Even as she reached for it she told herself it was only to throw the thing into the refuse-box so that no other gum-chewing woman could revel over Jerry's delinquencies. But as she crossed the marble aisle she unfolded the illustrated sheet and, heedless of the crowd that hurried past her, studied the illustration, "Bedroom of Jerry Veerland, where shooting occurred."

If the bullet had struck Jerry instead of the maltese cross, could she ever have eradicated his memory? Wasn't it the knowledge that he was alive and well, the fact that he was going back to France to continue his interrupted amour that was

completing the task she had not been able to accomplish in eight months?

In the cut she could see a pair of Jerry's shoes under the chiffonier and she remembered his toe-petting. Yes, she hated him!

She held the paper poised for a second before dropping it into the green-tin refuse-box, looking for signs of Jerry's old shiftlessness . . . soft collar here, a necktie there. Her eyes were caught by an object on the chiffonier. It might be almost anything. Studied closely, it was only a mass of dots. But she could imagine it was her picture in the tooled-leather frame.

If Jerry were traveling with her picture, if he had carried it about for eight months, it meant only one thing. There was no French liaison. She was the cause of his not marrying Eleanor. If that were true, despite his actions, despite everything, in some queer, inexplicable way she was positive he had always loved her!

## Chapter XXV

EXHAUSTED by her emotional struggle, Daphne sat all the way back to Bramton with her eyes closed, her head resting against the window, while her weary mind tried to grasp the new thought. Suppose she were not merely one of Jerry's passing flames! Whatever his relationship with other women, hadn't theirs been ennobled by more than a fleeting passion? Those afternoons in Eden, when she had quivered to the beat of his heart; their honeymoon headed for nowhere, caring only that they were together; their home? Weren't these founded on true love? That was what he had tried to tell her the night she left and again the next day, when she had been adamant.

But suppose he did love her. Of what use, love, when it must be supplemented by this woman and that? She knew the anguish it caused, not only from watching her mother but from personal experience. He would always be Jerry-the-susceptible. Yet how *could* she go on hating him if she knew he really loved her? And she *must* hate him, or how could she marry Glen? She tightened her

fingers on her aching temples. No, she wouldn't believe it was her picture on the chiffonier. She would be infinitely better off thinking of him as married to a French girl.

Dazed, she climbed down to the platform at Bramton and paused stupidly in front of old Joe Kane, the baggage-man.

"I say, Miss Daphne, you was a wise girl to get rid of that Veerland. I never seen a feller yet with hair like his'n who could be faithful to women."

Her own conclusions expressed by this crude countryman made her writhe.

"I must telephone for Michael," she exclaimed, hurrying away from the garrulous old man, who had cornered his chew of tobacco for a long harangue.

But in the telephone booth she suddenly decided to call Glen and learn definitely if Jerry had a new entanglement. Glen's voice buoyed her up and gave her a feeling of relaxed confidence, like floating on quiet water in the warm sun. Now, as he proved his love in his anxiety over her uneventful trip, her heart reached out for him. She was through with riotous adventures and false philosophies. She wanted peaceful happiness such as Glen would give her.

"Glen, dear."

"Yes, Daphne?"

"I was in the library this afternoon to get a book. I heard Jerry's voice . . . didn't I?"

After a slight hesitation:

"Yes, dear . . . a few legal matters. He's sailing for Europe on Friday."

How could she ask one lover if the old one still cared for her? Yet she must know. If she had been wrong in her premise, how unnecessarily cruel to torture herself! Her heart would give her no peace until she knew. "Glen, is it true, as the papers intimate, that he has a love-affair on in France?"

"No." The answer was decisive.

"Then why wouldn't he marry Eleanor, Glen?" She hated herself for asking the question; if her suspicion were right, it would only make her more unhappy, but she must know. "Was it because he still . . . cared for me, Glen?"

"Probably. I don't blame him for that. Listen, Daphne: you've got to stop worrying about him. He's going to make a new beginning; there's nothing any one can do for him." His voice became pleading: "Please, dear, try to forget that part of your life."

Oh, if Glen would only make her forget! She longed to obey, she who would never be governed. At times like this, wilful women regret their autocracy.

"I want to, Glen," she agreed docilely. "I



must." Yet, at the same time, she was repeating to herself, "Despite everything, Daphne, I swear you're the only woman I ever loved!"

Instead of telephoning for Michael, she decided to walk home, dreading Grace's caustic tongue.

Jerry loved her, and no one could do anything about it. If only she had L'Aiglon, what a comfort to canter through the woods again! Suppose it did awaken tender memories. Jerry was leaving on Friday; she might indulge in one last orgy of tender thoughts. He had been her man for over three years, and he loved her!

Natives hurried up to her, but she passed them unseen. Acting on a sudden impulse, she turned down a squalid lane that led into the woods. Fleet as a deer, she sped along the hard dirt path, scattering last year's leaves, seared and brown. There was no hurry, yet she ran most of the two miles, until, exhausted, she pushed through the bushes and stood, breathless, in Eden.

Here had been staged their entire love-life—their meeting, their courtship, their marriage, and now their final separation. Sobs clutched at her throat. Here Jerry had sat, in that brown-tweed suit, pouring out his love with his blue, blue eyes. It had been genuine love. He loved her still. But no one could do anything about it!

She lay in the tall, cool grass and buried her

face in her arms, a slim line of tan. Her fingers combed the long blades. She had no desire to cry. The ache that possessed her was too old and deep to find relief in tears. She pressed her flattened breasts to the earth until her coat buttons hurt. Jerry had often hurt her that way in the passion of his embraces.

After a time she rose and walked toward the bushes, calling, "Good-by, Jerry. Good-by, Jerry dear." Then, turning her back on the little stage, she made her way to the path. She was soon out on the State road, her face set and stern.

A noisy Ford drew up beside her. Why couldn't people leave her alone?

"Hi, Daphne, you ain't too haughty to ride with your old uncle, now you're a counselor?"

She turned around.

"Hello, Uncle Robert, I didn't see you. Sure, I'll take a hitch."

She had left Jerry forever. It was true enough. No one could do anything for him. She must face the world and go on living her own life.

Robert Churchill undid the hook that replaced the broken catch and swung open the door.

"You're lookin' kinder tuckered, Daphne. These are hard times, as we all know."

"Yes," she agreed simply, appreciating his cryptic sympathy. If every one would only be as inarticulate!

"Your grandma's been restless to see you, Daphne. You couldn't stop in?"

She hesitated, finally deciding that she preferred Aunt Hetty to Grace.

"All right. I might even stay to tea if I were invited."

Later she was sorry she had made the suggestion. She knew by her mother's voice over the telephone that she was disappointed not to have her at home. Moreover, her grandmother's apologies were harder to endure than Aunt Hetty's keen satisfaction.

"I've been a worryin' and reproachin' myself all day long, Daphne dear," the old lady said, pressing the rigid girl to her plump, sagging old body. "I didn't make it any secret of thinkin' you'd done wrong leaving Jerry, even though the law said as how you could, but now we all know what he really is, I can't tell you how bad I feel."

"Goodness knows I tried to make you realize," snapped Aunt Hetty, pouring a column of steaming water into the tea-pot.

Daphne wanted to demand: "How is Jerry any worse than he was eight months ago? Would you have him marry a woman he doesn't love?" But what was the use? No one could help him, now.

"Glen has been in touch with him, and says he is going back to France on Friday, so we don't

have to consider him any more do we?" She said, discouraging the subject.

"A nice place Europe must be, with its Emma Goldmans and Jerry Veerlands," sniffed Aunt Hetty, fitting on the porcelain cover.

Grandma sank into her rocker and smiled up at Daphne.

"I think I prefer America, myself, with its Glen Bruces. Don't you, dear? He always was a sweet lad. I remember when he had the measles, I helped take care of him. There never was a disease for bringing out the cussedness of a child like the measles, but he was as cheerful as if it was a picnic. I made you a batch of oatmeal cookies, to-day, dear." Oatmeal cookies were Grandma Churchill's white flag.

After supper Uncle Robert returned to the store and Aunt Hetty, expressing a vehement detestation of dish-washing, yet refusing all offers of help, sighed as she worked; while Daphne drew up the bent-wood rocker that had been her father's, and watched her grandmother's skilful fingers set up stitches for a new face-cloth.

"Guess who's to get this dozen, Daphne."

The girl did not answer.

She thought of the other dozen—six-ribbed pattern for her, block design for Jerry. "Male and female, created she them," Jerry had laughed.

His genuine and unstinted enthusiasm had been partially responsible for the secure place he had won in Grandma's old heart. She had been his last loyal defendant, and now she was knitting for his successor.

Rising suddenly, Daphne pulled on her hat.

"I've got to go. It's been an endless day."

At home, Grace and her mother were sitting in the library. Archie had been detained in town. They were eager for news, but Daphne felt as if she could not talk.

"Well, for Heaven's sake! Haven't you a thing to say for yourself?" demanded Grace, when Daphne had dropped into a chair and reached for part of the evening paper.

She looked up wearily.

"Nothing happened. I went to the office in a taxi, was kept there like a prisoner,—even for lunch,—returned to the station in a taxi, walked to Grandma's, and here I am."

"Lie on the divan, dear," pleaded her mother, flattening a pillow, "you look awfully tired."

"I am," she agreed, complying. It was here on the arm of the divan, close to her head, that she had perched that first night Jerry had called. She could remember the ecstatic suspense—a mingling of hope and fear as she waited for him to make love. Later in the evening, he had revealed his

whole character with that caressing foot! Why hadn't she taken warning then?

Her mother came back from the hall closet with a light duster which she threw over her. Mrs. Churchill contended that horizontal positions demanded more covering than perpendicular. The quiet act touched Daphne. What an ingrate she was, not even to tell them the little she knew!

"I guess the excitement won't last long." She tried to keep the sharpness out of her tone. "Glen heard from Jerry. He's sailing for France on Friday . . . for good."

"For good, huh!" sniffed Grace, with her aunt's sarcasm.

Mrs. Churchill gave her a warning frown and silence ensued.

"I think I'll go to bed; I am awfully tired." Daphne sat up and stretched. "I'm not going in to town to-morrow, so don't call me, Mother."

"Listen!" Grace held up a maternal finger. "For Heaven's sake! There's Junior already. I thought he'd go until ten o'clock."

"I'll give him his bottle, if you like," volunteered Daphne. She couldn't bear the thought of Grace hovering around upstairs, questioning her.

"Sure you don't mind? Thanks a heap. Believe me, you've had the easier day."

Daphne fed the baby in an old-fashioned, strictly forbidden manner. She held him in her arms and pressed his soft little body to her while he worked at the amber nipple.

He was her baby . . . Jerry's and hers. In the dim light, she pictured his eyes cobalt blue. Jerry was standing over her shoulder, looking down at them both and saying, "Daffodowndilly, my darling, I've never seen such a beautiful picture!"

She wanted Jerry! Of what use all this pretense? She wanted him. She ached for him. Love was the one thing immortal in the body. It couldn't be killed. Hadn't she tried for eight months? Didn't all her intelligence, every reasoning power she possessed urge her to forget him? But it was impossible. She loved him!

She tucked the baby into his crib, rinsed the empty bottle, and locked herself into her "office." From beneath the paper lining in her middle bureau drawer she drew out his handkerchief, and unknotted her engagement- and wedding-rings. Then from the back of her closet she produced the riding-crop with its missing initial. She was a lawyer collecting her exhibits.

Jerry loved her. For this one night, she was going to be his. To-morrow . . . well . . . to-morrow she must be strong enough to take up the fight again.



When she was ready for bed, she slipped on the platinum wedding-ring and the square-cut solitaire. Jerry's handkerchief she spread under her cheek, while she hugged the crop in her arms.

Had there ever been a girl who acted with less intelligence?

## Chapter XXVI

THE next day Daphne confined herself to the upper floors of her mother's house and denied curious visitors so much as a glimpse of her. The newspapers had spurred their jaded readers with a new interest. Mrs. Dundee's father was coming East in a private car to carry back his daughter's body. He must indeed be a millionaire! Bramton had never before been so important.

Even Grace obtained a vicarious pleasure in the hum of excitement and gladly permitted Daphne to take charge of the baby while she sat in the swing, shaking her glossy head in agreement with the calumny that, despite Mrs. Churchill's efforts toward moderation and tolerance, was cheerfully heaped upon Jerry. Daphne crept about little Archie's play-yard, now barking like a St. Bernard, now roaring like a lion. Ah, but lions had manes like Jerry's hair, and she was determined to forget about Jerry. This was Wednesday. There was only to-morrow left. On Friday he sailed out of her life forever! She ceased to be a menagerie and sat studying the spotted rose-velvet rug until yowls of disgust reminded her of her task.

Twice during the day Glen telephoned to know how she was. Should he come out that evening? She discouraged him, hiding her reluctance to see him. Friday, after Jerry had sailed, she would feel differently.

Daphne was getting little Archie ready for bed when big Archie returned.

"I see the Band of Little Scandal-gleaners has not yet adjourned. Aren't you selfish, hiding up here?" he asked dryly.

"Absolutely," Daphne agreed, poking the baby's chubby fist through his nightgown sleeve. After all, hadn't Grace, who had declared herself so "stupid," shown a lot of intelligence in marrying Archie? He was such a dear. "I'll have your olive-branch in bed in a second, if you want to undress for dinner."

He pushed back a stack of brilliant picture-books and sank wearily on the end of the chaise-longue. "No, I shan't change. This suit is getting too seedy for ecclesiastical purposes."

A silence followed. That was one of the comfortable things about Archie; his silences were never tense. For the moment, Daphne could picture the calm peace of a complete little family—father, mother, child. The chaotic room about her faded into the peace of the empty back nursery. Why couldn't her life have run along like that? Oh Jerry! Jerry!

Black smudges shadowed her eyes in a sweeping curve, and two lines extended from her nose to the corners of her determined mouth. Of what use lamenting the past? She wasn't an Eleanor, to kill herself for love.

"I can't get over thinking about her, Archie. Even you ministers don't know what's the other side of the grave. Wouldn't you have thought life would have some value for her?"

He nodded.

"Temporarily unbalanced."

She hugged the baby to her passionately. He was an armful, now, at thirteen months.

"I was just thinking, Archie . . . it must have been an awful shock to Jerry. I imagine he was afraid of death . . . more than most of us, I mean. He was so immensely alive."

"He is terribly unnerved. But . . ." Archie paused and flicked nothing from his cuff.

Daphne had caught the slip. "He *is*, Archie? How do you know? Did you see him?"

He nodded.

"I spent last night with him."

While she was morbidly fondling trinkets, Archie had been doing something for Jerry.

"And was he terribly upset?" Daphne hurriedly tucked the baby into his crib, that she might concentrate her attention on her brother-in-law's report.

Archie frowned as if he wasn't sure just how much he should say.

"Of course, Jerry is probably a neurotic to begin with, which would account for his philanderings."

"Probably. Undoubtedly Father was, too . . . but it doesn't lessen the misery of the non-neurotic," she interrupted, bitterly.

"Of course not," he agreed. "I wasn't offering that as an excuse—only as a cause of his condition. He's doing the best thing in the world under the circumstances. He's going to England to live."

"England, Archie? I thought France."

He shook his head.

"Doesn't know the language. Better chance for him in England."

Of course he didn't. That was to have been part of their fun abroad—making themselves understood.

In her own room, sitting by the bay-window, she stared into the bright spring evening. Jerry in foggy England, when he hated rain! How would his whimsical imagination get along with stolid John Bull? On what would he feed his pagan love of beautiful women? She saw all English maidens with flat walking-shoes, wind-blown cheeks, and bad teeth. She wanted Jerry to be happy, and he fitted in better with the olive groves of Arcady. How could she ever marry Glen and think of

Jerry, harassed by the memory of Eleanor's death, an exile in England?

She ate her dinner in silence. Later, when the family gathered in the library, Mrs. Churchill, with the humbleness of one trying to get a loan, offered to play a game of cribbage with her, but Daphne said she preferred to read.

She stared at the printed page, determined to rid her mind of an idea that had become untenable—the gregarious Jerry alone with his harrowing thoughts. What of it? It wasn't her fault. She turned several pages in rapid succession. She must make herself forget that Jerry loved her. So did Glen, and Glen's love was dependable.

With a loud slam she closed the book. Archie looked up from the paper over which he was dozing. Grace frowned and protested:

"Heavens! My nerves are on edge! I wish you wouldn't do that. It sounded like a pistol-shot!"

Her nerves were on edge! What about Jerry's?

The telephone rang. Mrs. Churchill, Grace, Archie, Daphne, all sat motionless.

"I'll answer it." Daphne sprang up just as Archie was rising. If it was bad news she wanted to get it first-hand.

But it was only Glen, telephoning for the third time.

"I just wanted to say good night, Daphne. You're sure you're all right?"

"Positive, Glen," she answered wearily.

"Daphne . . ." a pause. "It begins to look as if that little matter would not be raked up."

She knew what his cryptic sentence meant. The reporters would not discover that Jerry and she had undergone no ceremonial marriage. She ought to be vastly relieved, for she didn't want to share in the public's scorn. But she felt no slightest reaction of comfort.

"Peggy's asleep with her cheek on the stuffed elephant you gave her, Daphne. I wish I had such an anodyne for you, dear," Glen said tenderly.

"Thank you, Glen, but I'm all right." He was too good to her. Every one was. She didn't deserve it. He said good-by and she returned the telephone slowly to the table. What was she doing to Glen? Trying to love him when all her heart-strings were knotted about Jerry?

She took no trinkets to bed with her that night. She had the figment of Jerry himself. Jerry alone, miserable, his nerves wrecked, his self-respect shattered! All night she cuddled him in her warm, loving arms; and in the morning she sprang out of bed vitalized by a grim determination.

Archie had left by the time she got down to the dining-room. She was sorry, for she had counted on his support. All right, she would weather the storm alone.



"You're not going to town?" Grace demanded, noticing the brown street dress.

Daphne nodded, and gripped her chair with strong, square fingers.

"I've decided to take Jerry back if he wants me."

There was tense silence in the room, broken by a harsh grating, as Mrs. Churchill rubbed her right wrist.

"*Jerry!*" Grace's voice was hysterical—half horror, half mirth. "You're not serious?"

"I'm serious, sane, and determined. If Jerry wants me, I'm going back to him."

"Why, you won't be allowed! He's a national villain, a disgusting degenerate—"

"Mother, will you come up to my room?" Without waiting, Daphne dashed upstairs. This was only the beginning of what she would have to endure for the rest of her life. A tragedy such as Jerry had participated in could never be lived down.

Mrs. Churchill was deadly pale as she sat on the edge of the narrow, unmade bed that had once been his.

"I think, dear, that you are mistaking sympathy for affection." She turned her thin face up to Daphne's, blinking rapidly. "I hope and pray you will not let a temporary emotion ruin your whole life."

"But eight months ago you didn't really want me to divorce Jerry, did you?" Daphne asked gently.

"That was before this disgraceful . . ."

There it was again . . . disgraceful . . . villain . . . degenerate. Poor Jerry!

"Is it so disgraceful for him to refuse to marry Eleanor, when he loves some one else?" She picked up the crop from her desk and ran it through her fingers.

"I don't dignify it with the name of love," remonstrated her mother. "It is something much less noble."

"For other women, yes. But not for me, Mother." She tilted her wilful chin. "Jerry wouldn't marry Eleanor because he still loves me. Glen told me so."

Her mother opened her eyes in surprise, then shook her head wisely.

"That isn't any guarantee against the future, dear. I had hoped you and Glen—"

Daphne knelt on the bed and took the narrow face between her hands.

"Glen's wonderful, Mother. My intelligence urges me to marry him. Why, he would give me everything in the world the heart could wish . . . except Jerry." How uneven the balance must seem to any one else! Glen's devotion, his social and

professional position, his wealth, little Peggy, and her own business prospects, weighed against what? A man who had failed her under the most bitter circumstances, whose name was still bandied about in the head-lines of the newspapers, sketches of him displayed on the thrillers. This was not what Daphne saw. Her man was battered by the world, filched of his self-respect, exiled. He needed her! Therefore he was indispensable to her. It wasn't a sacrifice. It was giving up something she wanted tremendously for that which she craved even more. If Jerry needed her, then she needed him!

"No, Daphne, I can never reconcile myself to this mistake," Mrs. Churchill insisted, locking her thin fingers. "I've tried never to interfere in your happiness, but this time interference is for your good. He will be gone to-morrow. Use a little reason, dear. Wait just six months. That isn't so long."

Daphne decided to tell her mother the whole truth. Because she had never been married to Jerry, she felt no slightest obligation to go back to him; she had not even gone through the formula of promising to live with him so long as they both should live. Yet she knew that her mother, for that very reason, would believe it was her mortal obligation to return and marry him, thus saving

her immortal soul—as if one could reach back and expurge three years of unrighteousness by a brief ceremony. However, none of her iconoclasm was in her tone; rather a great tenderness:

“Mother, I never married Jerry.”

Mrs. Churchill drew back.

“Not married? You . . . lived with him?”

How could she explain her motives to her mother? The revolts of youth are always inexplicable to the older generation.

“I thought that by entrusting him with my honor I might keep him from slipping. It wasn’t that I didn’t believe in marriage, Mother. I do. It’s one of the most fundamental institutions in the world. That was why I tried the other way. Don’t you see, Mother? Marriage is more than a ceremony, by a parson. It is the union of two people, mentally, morally, as well as physically. It’s sticking to your mate, in other words. If I could get Jerry to be faithful to me without marriage, he would be more truly my husband than if he were faithless after a wedding in church.” She paused, rather proud of her explanation.

But her mother shook her head.

“He wasn’t faithful to you, anyway, Daphne, so—”

“That’s the trouble. It was a good theory, only it didn’t work.”

“No, dear. If you lived with a man without

marrying him, you were living in sin; and no theory could change the law of God."

Daphne made no attempt to argue. She knew that she had reached the iron girders of her mother's beliefs and nothing she could say would have any more effect than a summer zephyr on the Woolworth Building.

Mrs. Churchill bit her quivering lip.

"Did I fail to teach you that much, dear?"

"No, Mother; you taught me that," Daphne admitted. "My thoughts were as rational as could be, cold and calm; but then my emotions got busy and there were times when I suffered as great a remorse as you would have, I believe. You see, Mother, the plan wasn't meant for always. Only for four years."

"But the divorce in White Plains—was that all a fraud, too? Was that why you wouldn't let me come?"

Daphne looked longingly at the clock. She must get started. It was already nine, and she had so much to do! Her explanation was hurried:

"No, that was genuine enough. Glen thought it might come under the heading of a common-law marriage. It is sometimes a very neat point in law, Mother, whether you're respectable or damned."

"But even a common-law marriage has no moral significance, dear."

Daphne did not argue. She felt that she had gained her point.

"Now, Mother, don't you want me to go back to Jerry and marry him?"

Mrs. Churchill resumed the worries of a lifetime with a deep sigh:

"Yes, dear; under the circumstances there's nothing else to do."

Daphne parted the gray hair and pressed a kiss on the high forehead. She hoped that sometime she could make up to her mother for all the misery she had caused. But now she must start her campaign. Rapidly she detailed her plans. She was going immediately *home*. The word reached into a recess of her soul that had been closed as long as the house on Carlton Avenue. She would spend the day getting the place in order, and Jerry was to arrive in the early evening.

Over the telephone she enlisted Archie's help. He received her news without comment and agreed to do his best to get Jerry to come. She telegraphed Glen, asking him to call at five o'clock. The fact that she was back at Carlton Avenue would be very significant to him. Poor Glen! But he had Peggy. Jerry had no one.

She refused her mother's offered help, but finally agreed to use Michael; and an hour later she was speeding over the concrete road, the

chauffeur beside her. In the rear were her old straw suitcase, their chest of silver, and rags for housecleaning.

It was almost noon when she swung into Carlton Avenue. The Veerlands' house no longer stood out, a polished jewel. The French doors that opened on the little iron balconies were boarded. Ivy dangled leafless threads, the bay-trees were gone, the creamy front door was splotched and filthy. A vandal had stolen the knocker that really knocked, leaving an ugly white scar; and the red courtyard was littered with an accumulation of papers and old leaves, some beaten to powder, others blown against the brick wall in their fight for freedom.

Within, streaks of light through the crescent in the solid shutters showed the spectral white mounds where Hannah and Mrs. Churchill had collected the furniture and covered it with sheets. The cold deadness of the place struck through to Daphne's marrow. What was she struggling to do? Perform a miracle? Could the dead past be resurrected? She slowly mounted the stairs, followed by Michael with her suitcase. By the fireplace stood a tall, ghostly shape. Jerry's chair! Their chair! Hope trickled through her. She was possessed, without apparent cause, by a feeling of sudden happiness. As she proceeded up the dark stairs to their bedroom, she wondered if it were



possible that Jerry and she might occupy that chair to-night!

She set Michael to unhooking the shutters while she rummaged through the suitcase for the rags and cleaning equipment. With her head tied up like a pirate's, her dress covered with a gingham apron dangling below her short skirt, she set to work yanking off the shrouds and swinging the furniture back to its accustomed place.

Beside the dusty high-boy she paused, overcome by a sudden fear. Suppose she was taking too much for granted? Suppose Jerry would not come? He, too, might think that a resurrection of the old life was a futile experiment! Curving her arm over the gritty top where once her picture had stood, she buried her face and smothered the sobs that tore at her throat, convulsing her bowed back.

Michael paused in his noisy task to study her with a worried frown. Grace had always said that it showed a lack of culture when servants liked their employers. Michael's kindly solicitude, on that basis, was an insult.

"If you say the word, Miss Daphne, I'll yank them shutters back in a jiffy and have you home in no time." He brushed the dust from his black gauntlet with a vigorous *plunk-plunk*, ready to carry out his agreement.

Daphne straightened and wiped her eyes, tracking her cheeks with dirt.

"It's none of my business, and I ain't sayin' nothin', but you're making a mistake. He don't deserve that you should stand by him after a mess like that. I leave it to anybody!"

Daphne shook her head and tried to smile.

"I'm crying, Michael, for fear he won't come back!"

The big Irishman looked down at the dusty floor, silent for a moment; then he nodded understandingly.

"Life does us dirty like that, sometimes, don't it?"

In two hours they had worked wonders. Sunshine once more flooded the house, the front courtyard was swept and washed, the bedroom vacuumed and dusted. While Daphne was busy with the living-room, she sent Michael with a long list of groceries to restock the larder. She was preparing for a victory. They must have food, she and Jerry!

Alone in the house, she pushed the humming vacuum cleaner back and forth over the living-room rugs, watching the pattern brighten and struggle to keep her mind on her work. Everything was so unsettled, there was no comfortable nook for her thoughts. Glen was coming at five. How she dreaded it! But whatever happened between her and Jerry, she knew she could never marry Glen. Intelligent love sounded all right in

arguments. There were people who could practise it, she felt sure. But Daphne was the victim of a rational mind and a sentimental heart. Even now, when her whole soul reached out for Jerry, when she ached to nurse his shattered nerves back to health, when her whole being felt like a dammed-up torrent that would find freedom only through him, her mind saw clearly all that she was giving in exchange. Glen Bruce fed her ego, and that was not to be despised. With him she would amount to something. He would be carrying her on his shoulder and she would see above the heads of the ordinary people. With Jerry it would be reversed. Always he would be a burden. She must bolster up his morals, cheer him, forgive him, and . . . bolster him up some more. Had she only been an unfeeling intellectual or an unthinking sentimentalist, life would have been simple. But with her, as with most of us, the two carried on a warfare and she was the battle-ground.

Above the whirl of the machine sounded a loud thumping on the front door. Reporters? She turned off the motor, wondering what she should do.

A key turned in the lock.

"Daphne!"

"Jerry!" She stood motionless and waited!

## Chapter XXVII

SLOWLY he mounted the stairs; his ashen face as immobile as a Benda mask, only the blue eyes were alive, no longer burning with adoration, but restless and frightened.

Daphne, who had pictured their meeting as a cyclonic reunion, stood rooted to the floor. This weary man, with sagging shoulders and limp hands, her Jerry?

"I dropped in to tell you your sacrifice is wasted, Daphne." He spoke with no slightest sign of emotion.

"But it isn't sacrifice, Jerry. Duty has nothing to do with it." Her voice was as dull as his. Oh Jerry, Jerry, after all these endless months, did it mean nothing, seeing her again?

"Whatever it is, it's wasted. I supposed you knew I'm sailing for England to-morrow."

"I knew you planned to sail." She twisted the corner of her apron around her forefinger. This was the passionate scene she had imagined over and over last night! "Sit down, won't you, while we talk it over?"

"No. I only came because Archie insisted."

"Archie's a dear."

"Magnificent!"

Absurd, standing the width of the room between them, discussing Archie, when she wanted to fling her arms about his neck and cry, "Jerry, I love you!"

"He stayed with you all that first night?"

Jerry nodded.

"It must have been a comfort," breathed Daphne.

"Yes." His eyes shifted up and down the room. "Well, that's all I have to say. Best of luck." He turned and started to descend the stairs.

"Wait, Jerry." She remembered what Glen had said about the comfort of a priest. "Haven't I a right to know how it all happened? How she came to do it and . . . and everything?"

For the first time there was an eagerness in his voice.

"You wouldn't want me to tell you, would you?"

Her soul revolted at the idea. She wanted to forget Eleanor, never to think of her again. But she answered gently:

"If she killed herself, Jerry, because you loved me, doesn't that make me share in the tragedy?"

"Share that horror? No! No! If only I could get her out of my mind for one second!"

He hadn't denied his love for her. Daphne

gathered courage, and crossing the room, took one of his limp hands.

"Tell me everything, Jerry."

He broke away from her and walked restlessly up and down the room, talking hurriedly.

"We had a big row before I went abroad. She insisted on my marrying her, but how could I when every time I looked at her I wanted to cry out for you?"

Daphne drank in his words, eyes wide, lips parted.

"You couldn't, Jerry."

"Just the same, she followed me to France. Finally I thought I had made her believe everything was over. I tried to be kind, but I hated her! I've always hated her ever since she deliberately showed you my pipe. . . . Oh, don't you see life's a burlesque? There isn't any sense in it! I knew all last summer that I was in danger of paying for Eleanor with everything I cared for most, but I was cursed with a desire for more than I could have. I wasn't satisfied with just you, Daphne. I was mad to possess you both. And now . . ."

He kicked aside the cord of the vacuum and continued his pacing. "I don't want anything, I'm in hell. Isn't it all a damned joke, this business of living!"

"I thought so very often last fall; but I'm not so sure, now I have you again."

"Me?" He laughed a little wildly. "I'm nothing but a jumble of frightened memories . . . that yellow heap . . . that awful face! God, shall I ever get rid of it?" Trembling, he dropped into a chair, their chair, and pressed his hands over his eyes.

Kneeling, she wrapped her arms about him, but he was no more responsive than a marble angel in the Bramton cemetery.

"With my help, dear, won't it be easier?"

"No. I wish to God she'd killed me, too. Her punishment was cleverer—and she was such a stupid woman."

"It must have been horrible," breathed Daphne, shuddering.

"Horrible?" The terror in his blue eyes frightened her. "So ghastly you can never imagine it. There she stood, exquisitely beautiful . . . she was that, at any rate . . . and in a second . . ." With a hoarse cry, he once more buried his face, groaning! "If only I could get her out of my mind for a single minute! . . . She wore a yellow velvet dress, the color of a daffodil. . . ." He rose abruptly. "I'm going. It isn't fair. You couldn't sleep at night if you saw what I do."

How could she nurse him back to health, if she didn't know what he was suffering? Hiding her revulsion, she prompted:

"She wore a yellow dress, go on."



"I had been trying, all the way home from Europe, to make myself believe I could marry her . . . feeling that maybe it was the one decent thing left for me to do. . . . If she hadn't come after me . . . hadn't worn that yellow dress . . ."

"Yes," she whispered, fingers interlocked.

"I told her it was useless, I could never marry her. . . . Nor could I."

"No."

"She said something about my never marrying any one else. . . . It was all very quick. . . . I don't seem to remember the shot. One minute she was a beautiful woman, tall, queenly; the next . . . an ugly heap . . . blood . . . I can't tell you. It was too frightful."

She flung her arms about his quivering form.

"We'll fight it together, Jerry: fight and win!"

Some one was pounding on the front door.

Jerry thrust her from him.

"More reporters! I won't see them! God!" He looked about frantically for a hiding-place.

"It's only Michael," Daphne promised, running downstairs, glad of the homey interruption. When she had sent him off, she would induce Jerry to help her put away the groceries; thus in little matter-of-fact ways she would gradually lead him from his haunting horror.

But when she flung open the door, it was not the chauffeur.

"Glen!" She stepped back, groping for support until she reached the banisters. "So soon?"

"Daphne, why . . . this?" He waved his Panama hat about the little hall.

Poor Glen! how could she have forgotten him?—forgotten even to pity him? She couldn't explain, with Jerry at the head of the stairs, possibly listening. Hurrying ahead of him, she led the way into the dining-room. Michael had thrown open the French doors, and a bright light flooded the room, making the sheet-covered furniture white as marble tombs.

"I've been cleaning, Glen." She yanked off the covers as she talked. "Michael helped me. He's gone to the store. I must look a fright!"

Glen was gazing at her with unusual sternness.

"You look like a little smudged angel, dear. Why are you doing this?"

She studied her grimy hands; her answer was scarcely audible:

"I had to, Glen."

"Pity?"

She shook a negative. The dust-rag flapped about her ears; she yanked it off, shaking out her hair. Then she turned her honest, far-apart eyes full on his.

"I'm frightfully sorry for the mess I've made, Glen. I meant to be fair to you, but there isn't any use. I love Jerry." She looked from him to the

rings she was wearing. "Oh, I fought against it. I said I wouldn't love him because he wasn't worthy of it—"

"And God knows he's not."

"But I was only bolstering up my pride because I thought he had ceased loving me. You see, Glen, I'm one of those people you spoke of years ago, who love in spite of."

"No you're not, dear. You're a modern, intelligent girl."

"I used to think so, but I don't believe emotions can be educated. Some folks are born with adjustable affections; they stand a better chance of happiness. But for those of us, like me, neither college degrees nor cigarette smoke will make any difference. I can never love any one but Jerry."

"And if he lapses again?"

She appreciated the justice of his question. Jerry, nurtured back to health, would be the same weak, attractive Jerry of old.

"If he does, Glen. I'll hate it—maybe you know how much. But as long as he loves me, I'll stick."

"Well, you won't." The lawyer had ceased his cross-examining and become a man. He took Daphne in his strong arms, his jaw was set. "I'm going to fight now, battle not only for my own happiness—for yours. I won't let you go back to that man. I've loved you, Daphne, ever since you dashed into your grandmother's kitchen, your eyes

shining like stars. That day I envied the man who made them shine, and when I knew more about him I determined to wait until you had overcome the infatuation."

Infatuation? Did he still believe it was only that? Did he suppose any other man had the power to make her eyes shine with just that light? She tried to free herself, but he held her fast.

"Listen to me, darling. To-morrow he sails for England. Let him go. Wait six months before you do this spectacular thing. I beg you . . . even if you never marry me!"

"Don't, please don't! . . . Glen dear, I think you're one of the best men on the face of the earth. If I were half the intellectual I pretended to be, I should have married you long ago. I'm not acting on an impulse. I know what I'm giving up, but . . . Oh, don't you see the futility of arguing?"

"I see that I can give you the happiness you deserve. Take me, Daphne, and love will come."

"Yes, Daphne, he's right." Jerry had slowly descended the back stairs.

"Where the devil did you come from?" demanded Glen.

"Hell—where I belong. Don't worry, Bruce; it's all right. I've just been bidding Daphne good-by."

"Jerry dear, please don't start all that again,"

she pleaded, holding him by his coat button and looking appealingly into his face. "I've explained everything to Glen and he's just leaving."

"When I go, I take you with me," protested the lawyer.

"Yes, take her with you." Jerry gestured indolently, as if he were brushing away a teasing fly.

"You know you want me to stay," she begged.

"Not so much." He jerked himself free and, turning on his heel, strolled toward the portico, his gaze resting on the rank garden. "As a matter of fact, Daphne, you overestimate my affection for you."

"But you said, only a minute ago, you hated her on account of me."

He shrugged.

"I exaggerated. Anyway, it's over."

"That's a lie, Jerry! a lie! You know you still love me."

"For God's sake, Bruce! will you take her?" Jerry demanded savagely.

"No. I shan't go."

"Come, Daphne. He's doing the one decent thing in his life. Don't spoil it." Glen tried to lead her toward the hall, but she broke away.

"I will not go, I tell you!"

"Then I will."

Jerry was at the dining-room door when she

flung herself on him, holding him with a fierce love.

"You won't go anywhere without me. This is our home, we created it together. Don't you want to live in it?"

Color had flooded Jerry's pale cheeks, his breath was labored, his tone tense, as he tried to pry her wire fingers off his arm.

"I won't let you, Daphne. I tell you I won't—" She flung back her head and turned beseechingly to Glen.

"Please go."

He stood for a moment hesitating, then nodded his consent.

"Good-by, my dear."

She felt a surge of passionless love for him as she heard him cross the tiled hall, but with the closing of the front door a great exultation filled her. At last she was alone with her man.

"Why are you doing this, Daphne? A warped sense of duty?"

"Oh Jerry, you know it isn't!"

"But—great God, Daphne!—remember what I am. I'm as corrupt as that yard." He nodded toward the ruined garden, where weeds grew knee-high in the flower beds, and sprouted between the flags of the path. Pinwheel crab-grass sprawled over the velvety lawn, an ailanthus tree shouldered

its way between the rose-bushes in the back. A wilderness of rank growth.

"That's nature uncontrolled. It represents me," he added bitterly.

"But the garden isn't corrupt, Jerry. It's only undisciplined. It needs you to weed it and pull it back into shape, just as you need me, dear, to take care of you. Remember how it was, Jerry? White candytuft and blue delphinium, with hollyhocks against the brick wall? Don't you want it like that again? Don't you want to eat breakfast on the portico and pick me a rose in the middle of the meal?"

"Don't, Daphne! I can't stand it."

"In your little garden, Jerry, there is me. . . . You do want me?"

"Daphne . . ." He turned away from her and hid his face in his arm.

"We won't have any 'plan' this time, dear. I'll be your wife because I love you and you'll be my husband for the same old-fashioned reason."

"Great God! remember what I am!" His voice was torn with misery. "A villain, a roué, a murderer—yes, that's what some of the papers call me. I can't let you marry a man like that!"

"You're none of those things, Jerry darling." She slipped her arm about his neck. "You're weak . . . and a little selfish. So am I. We belong



to each other, because we love each other. Jerry . . . remember the lights along the East River? 'If each one of those lights represented the love of one man for his wife, they wouldn't all of them equal my love for you.' Is that still true?"

He straightened. His arms were about her for the first time.

"My darling! my darling! Could we get away, together, just you and me?"

"Up in the New England woods, Jerry, and carve the arrow through the hearts?"

"Oh Daphne! might we? Our second honeymoon?"

"Our first, Jerry."







